

Central Primary School

Derby Road, Watford, WD17 2LX

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is good. Attainment in these subjects at Key Stage 2 is now better than in previous years and is in line with the national average.
- Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Consistently good teaching means that pupils do well in all classes.
- Pupils say that teachers make the lessons interesting and are very good at helping them to improve their work.
- The school is improving rapidly because the leaders identify any possible weaknesses in its performance and give teachers clear guidance on how they can improve both teaching and achievement.
- The governing body supports the school well and has the skills to make sure that leaders take the right decisions.
- Pupils say they feel safe, and they behave with courtesy and respect to teachers, visitors and each other.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing at Key Stage 2 is not as rapid as in reading and mathematics.
- Although overall attendance has risen rapidly, some pupils do not attend as regularly as others in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to gain the views of parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, looked at examples of pupils' work. They looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring records, behaviour records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sue Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) for these pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The headteacher was appointed in November 2011, having joined the school as acting headteacher in September 2010.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school manages a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This is for pupils with specific speech and language difficulties and needs and it is attended by 20 pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing to the levels of reading and mathematics by ensuring that teachers give pupils more opportunities to write independently at longer and challenging tasks, particularly in subjects other than English.
- Ensure that improvements in attendance are sustained by working closely with parents to discourage families from taking children out of school for holidays in term time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from starting points that on entry to the school are well below those typical of their age group. By the time they leave the school in Year 6 the attainment of pupils is average and rapidly improving in both English and mathematics.
- The school's assessment of English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 was too generous in the past. It showed progress at this key stage to be better than it was. This means that external information for pupils leaving the school in Year 6 was inaccurate. This will also be the case for the current Year 6 whose prior attainment was lower than average. Pupils typically made expected progress in Key Stage 1 but, as a result of improved teaching, made more rapid progress in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils in all year groups are now making much faster progress than in previous years. This is because of improvements in both the quality of teaching and the accuracy of the school's assessment. As a result, the school is rapidly addressing previous underperformance. For example, pupils in Year 6 have made an average of 18 months progress over the last 12 months and pupils in Year 5 are typically a year ahead of national expectations.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make particularly fast progress in their language and number skills, because they have many opportunities to practise these in all areas of their learning.
- Pupils currently make good progress in Key Stage 1. The school's assessment is now accurate and attainment by the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics is in line with the national average. They benefit from extensive practice in quick addition and subtraction that helps them tackle problems. Improved teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) means they are increasingly fluent and enthusiastic readers. Fewer than 40% of pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening in 2012, but it rose to 57% in 2013.
- Pupils read widely and many can scan information quickly and accurately. In mathematics, they can conduct complex investigations independently. Progress in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 is steady, but not as strong. This is because pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium make good progress in writing and outstanding progress in reading and mathematics. Their attainment is now in line with other pupils in the school. In 2012, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained as well as their classmates in mathematics and were more than two terms ahead of them in English. This is because the pupil premium money has been used effectively, and is well targeted on their needs.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and gaps are closing with other pupils. By the time they leave the school, they are typically less than one term behind other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress as a result of the well focused help given by teachers and support staff. Pupils in the speech and language base make good progress from their starting points and particularly in their self

expression and confidence. This helps to close the gap rapidly between them and others in the school so that on average, they are now two terms behind other pupils in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good and often outstanding throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers plan activities that are relevant to their experiences. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were working together to plan a journey from the Isle of Wight. This built on a recent school trip well and challenged them to apply a range of key skills effectively, which they did.
 - In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make rapid progress as a result of good teaching. In a nursery lesson, pupils were given regular opportunities to learn new words and used words such as 'sphere' and 'cylinder' confidently and accurately as a result.
 - Teachers find imaginative ways to make their lessons interesting. In project work, they give pupils regular opportunities to apply their reading and mathematics skills. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on the Victorians, pupils used their mathematics skills very well when solving problems and constructing time-lines.
 - Teaching assistants and other support staff give pupils very good support to make sure that they understand the tasks set. They use their knowledge of pupils' strengths to ask challenging questions. Consequently, pupils are making rapid progress.
 - Teachers' marking of pupils' work clearly explains strengths and areas for improvement. Books show that pupils are responding well to their teachers' comments, with many making rapid progress as a result. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities to assess their own work and this gives them a clear understanding of their achievements and what they need to do to improve.
 - Teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves. It is a particular strength of the good teaching within the speech and language base, where for example, very strong probing questioning encouraged the Year 1 and Year 2 pupils to further develop their answers and challenge each other on how to do better. This met their speech and language needs very well and improved their understanding of the topic.
 - In the best lessons, teachers set work that challenges pupils of all abilities. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on seaside poems, the teacher quickly and effectively checked pupils' understanding, setting individual challenges that meant all made rapid progress.
 - The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. In class and small groups, adults provide work that is well targeted on their needs, challenging and yet achievable. This was seen in small groups reading before school, where the activities helped pupils become more confident readers. This all supports their progress well.
 - Teachers teach the skills of writing well. However, they do not always leave enough time in lessons for pupils to write extensively in all subjects and so miss opportunities to develop these
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skills further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils quickly learn how to work by themselves. They do not rely on being constantly directed by teachers. Year 6 students told inspectors that they now work hard to solve problems for themselves before asking for help. They said teachers had shown them different strategies and this helped them to find the right answers.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure in the school and they show a good understanding of the issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in different situations; for example, when using the internet and social networking sites.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, including racism, sex and gender bullying, cyber-bullying and other forms of harassment. They do not feel that bullying occurs often in the school. They are confident that bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers and other adults. They are keen to emphasise how they would support victims of bullying and how they would challenge pupils who are bullying others.
- Pupils help each other in lessons. For example, in a Year 6 physical education lesson, they praised each other's achievements and supported each other if they did not do so well. As a result, pupils are confident at trying new things and are able to learn from their mistakes and use them to make progress in the future.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility, and the school council has led the way in improving outdoor play facilities. Pupils are excited by the creation of their new 'eco garden'.
- The school has a consistent approach to encouraging hard work, regular attendance and good behaviour. Pupils say behaviour systems are fair. In regular assemblies, pupils praise each other and celebrate their achievements and improvements. All this contributes well to pupils' good spiritual moral social and cultural development.
- Pupils arrive punctually to school. Although their attendance has improved as a result of the school's efforts to discourage unnecessary absences, it remains below the national average. Persistent absence is also above the national average. Attendance is lower than it should be because too many pupils miss school unnecessarily due to family holidays being taken in term time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher works relentlessly with senior leaders to evaluate the school's effectiveness and tackle areas of weakness. In two years, he has established a strong team of staff who work effectively together towards ambitious goals and are committed to continual improvement and development. Subject leaders now fulfil their responsibilities well for raising standards, for example by checking on the quality of teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and achievement is improving.

- Rigorous systems to assess the quality of teaching and learning give teachers clear guidance on how to improve their skills and classroom practice. Targets arising from observations form an important part of regular meetings on teachers' performance and decisions about their pay and promotion.
 - The speech and language facility is well led and managed and works very well with external agencies and parents so that pupils make good and sometimes better progress, particularly in relation to their speech and language needs.
 - The school has made good use of the expertise from the local authority, which has been helpful in raising the consistency and accuracy of internal assessment. Consequently, valuable data on pupils' achievement and progress is used to set clear priorities for the future.
 - The school has worked hard to build links with parents, especially those who find it difficult to work with the school. By attending weekly assemblies, parents can take pride in their children's success. Workshops on literacy, phonics and mathematics have helped parents understand and support their children's learning. Initiatives such as English speaking classes have helped parents to become more confident when talking to teachers and to understand the benefits of school. As a result, attendance rates are increasing.
 - The school enriches its curriculum through a wide range of clubs, visitors and community links, for example with different faith groups and with a local department store. The school gives pupils regular opportunities to learn about and share different traditions in class assemblies. Consequently, pupils show respect and tolerance for each other and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors regularly visit and meet with a wide range of staff to gather evidence about how well the school is doing. They know and ask questions about the achievement and progress of different groups of pupils in the school, including those for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium.
 - Governors understand their role very well and provide good challenge to senior leaders. Through prudent budgeting, they are ensuring the school's financial stability. They make sure that the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding fully meet national requirements.
 - Governors check pay decisions for teachers. They demand that pupils' progress justifies better pay and promotion.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117156 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 405689 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 285 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andrew Harries |
| Headteacher | John Mynott |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 Jan 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01923 225129 |
| Fax number | 01923 236660 |
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