

White Court School

Ennerdale Avenue, Great Notley, Braintree, CM77 7UE

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has maintained the good performance it achieved in the previous inspection.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Standards in English and mathematics are high by Year 6.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and make good progress in lessons through the school.
- Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good and ensures that they make good progress.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils feel safe. They are well supported by safeguarding arrangements.
- Good relationships between pupils and adults help learning to flow smoothly.
- The school is well led and managed and leaders ensure improvement continues in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Subject leaders manage their subject areas effectively.
- Governors give the school good support and hold leaders to account for its performance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well provided for.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet consistently outstanding. Sharing of best practice in teaching skills within the school and with other schools is underdeveloped.
- Marking gives pupils short-term goals for improvement but does not always show them how they can reach the highest levels over time.
- Teachers sometimes talk for too long and the time pupils have for independent work is reduced.
- The school is at an early stage of discussing with pupils which aspects of subjects and resources most fire their interest to help make learning always of the highest quality.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 29 lessons taught by 21 teachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors, staff, a representative from the local authority, the School Improvement Partner and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 95 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and carrying out the inspection, and also spoke to parents and carers in the playground.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and attainment, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies, and arrangements for safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils' books were examined in lessons and in a separate work sample with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Catherine Beeks	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Gay Tattersall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who speak English as an additional language are below national averages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action are below the national average, as are the proportions of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) are below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up her post two weeks ago.
- There is no alternative provision offsite.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make most teaching and learning outstanding by:
 - increased opportunities for pupils to work independently at an earlier stage in every lesson
 - identification and sharing of outstanding practice in this school and elsewhere, including in the checking and evaluation of whether progress is outstanding in lessons
 - clearer guidance to pupils in marking of what their next steps towards reaching higher levels should be
 - discussions with pupils about those aspects of subjects and material resources which would further engage their enthusiasm and lead them to the highest levels of attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the school is broadly typical of what is usually found nationally, although current entrants came in with lower standards. Children make good progress as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes. Close cooperation between staff and effective planning of learning make sure that individual children are well supported.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with standards above national averages in all main areas of learning. They achieve high standards in linking sounds and letters in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Good progress continues through Key Stage 1. Achievement in all subjects and skills, including reading and writing, is good.
- Pupils are fluent, confident readers who enjoy reading and can readily summarise what they have read. They read with expression and their understanding is reinforced by 'reading challenge' exercise books, which include helpful questions about the text.
- A few fluctuations in mathematics at Key Stage 1 are a current whole-school focus to ensure that progress remains consistently, at least, good. The school has successfully applied strategies to reinforce pupils' mathematical understanding, including an emphasis on written calculations and more mental exercises. For example, effective reinforcement occurred in a Year 1 literacy lesson which assembled Merlin's potion and pupils calculated successfully the quantities needed to make the most colourful brew.
- Standards in English and in mathematics are high at Key Stage 2. They are well above national expectations in reading and have risen in writing following work on handwriting and spelling, helped by input from visiting authors. Standards have remained consistently high over time, and achievement is, sometimes, outstanding. Discussions have begun with pupils about which resources and aspects of subjects interest them most to keep attainment consistently at the highest levels.
- All pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in lessons. They have regular opportunities to work independently but these do not occur early enough in some lessons. Pupils work well with other pupils and adults.
- Pupil premium funding is used well by providing additional help for the individual pupils eligible for it in and out of class. Its use is based on a careful check on each pupil's results and is regularly reviewed to make sure that eligible pupils make similar progress to others as they move through the school. Consequently, for example, pupils eligible for free school meals attain similar standards to those of others in the school.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, make similar progress to that of other pupils. Each individual has helpful support, such as one-to-one sessions with adults.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. However, staff are right to think that their teaching would benefit from further training in being able to identify and share best practice, both in this school and elsewhere. In particular, staff are not yet fully secure in identifying when teaching makes

progress outstanding in lessons.

- In a few lessons, teaching requires improvement because the teacher talks for too long and opportunities for pupils to work independently do not occur early enough in the lesson. As a result, there is, sometimes, insufficient time for pupils to fully develop their own ideas, for example, in writing longer pieces.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use electronic technologies, such as the interactive whiteboards, and questioning well to involve pupils in learning in lessons. Links between subject learning are well developed, as, for example, in a Year 5 lesson, where outstanding teaching of mathematics linked calculations with history in discussing King Edward VI and how many jewels he had and wanted.
- Lessons are conducted at a good pace. Pupils have regular opportunities to work together, including discussing learning with a partner. Teachers call on all pupils to participate actively, and there is an increasing emphasis on pupils being required to give reasons for their answers.
- Lessons are well planned to help pupils of all abilities to learn. Provision for more-able pupils is supplemented by sessions outside the timetable aimed at extending pupils' understanding of what they study.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers and pupils in lessons. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. For example, joint-planning sessions between teachers and teaching assistants, one-to-one extra help and work in small groups reinforce mathematical skills for these pupils and for those eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Reading is taught well. Younger pupils make rapid progress from effective teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics), and which is reinforced as pupils move through the school. Pupils are taught to read fluently and for meaning. Their understanding is checked in regular guided-reading sessions.
- Work is regularly marked and gives good opportunities for pupils to respond to the marking. Presentation of work is good. Books show clear evidence of progress with indications of the immediate next steps pupils need to take in learning. However, marking does not always show pupils what they need to concentrate on in order to achieve the very highest levels at the end of the term, year or key stage.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are very keen to learn in all lessons and across all year groups. They are, invariably, ready to work with each other and willingly tidy up their work areas at the end of lessons. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own actions from the moment they join the school – and they always do.
- Pupils behave extremely well in and out of lessons. Exclusions are rare and there have been none recently. Effective methods for managing behaviour are used well in lessons, and are well understood by pupils, who are reminded of the rules in assemblies and through the school's 'golden rules'. The school is a united community without discrimination, where all pupils have equal opportunities to learn. Extremist behaviour of any sort is not tolerated.

- Bullying and incidents of racism are very rare. Pupils have a very good understanding of the different forms that bullying might take, including homophobic and cyber bullying. They can explain what would happen if bullying occurred and are confident that the school would always respond quickly and effectively.
- Pupils feel safe and parents and carers agree with them. The school site provides a safe, secure environment for learning and has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. The range of support for these pupils helps them feel secure and ready to tackle the work they are expected to do.
- Pupils welcome opportunities to take responsibility. This emphasis on responsibility has been taken forward by appointing the school council as the pupils' task force. Pupils could readily say how they had helped the school to move forward through initiatives, such as choosing new playground equipment and promoting eco-codes across the school. However, pupils have not yet been fully consulted on what subject content and resources would most enthuse them and help them to reach even higher levels of attainment.
- Most pupils attend regularly. However, the attendance record has been affected by some unavoidable long-term absences for ill health last term, and by the recent outbreaks of viral illness nationally. The school takes effective steps to support any pupils who have to be absent for an extended period. Pupils are very punctual to school and lessons. Persistent absence rates are low.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has already established close working relationships with her deputies and all staff to take the school forward. Priorities have been accurately identified to lead the school to outstanding teaching and achievement.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They make regular observations of lessons and close analysis of data on pupils' progress and attainment – with a clear focus on improvement. Regular meetings are held to consider pupils' progress, review targets for improved performance and adjust them where necessary.
- Responsibilities have been shared across the school. Subject leaders' responsibilities for checking and evaluating progress and achievement are well developed. Leaders have already identified the priority of further sharing of best practice within the school and with other schools, including in evaluating what characterises outstanding progress in teaching and learning. However, this additional training has not yet been implemented.
- The school has well-defined systems for managing staff performance. Teachers' work is checked against the national standards currently used. The targets set for teachers have contributed to good and, sometimes, outstanding practice.
- The interesting variety of subjects taught is supplemented by many clubs and activities with which staff are heavily involved. Visits and visitors supplement what pupils learn and include close links with extra learning opportunities at local secondary schools. However, pupils, themselves, have not been fully involved in giving their views on what learning would most inspire their interest.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well provided for. Excellent displays of pupils' work show imagination and enthusiasm. Links with local churches are strong and include talks on world religions. Year 6 prefects help to reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Relationships are excellent. Links are growing with schools in Spain and Kenya.
 - The local authority has a 'light touch' relationship with this good school. Professional expertise is provided when needed and complemented by the work of an experienced external adviser.
 - Safeguarding procedures meet requirements with regular staff training and training for governors on safer recruitment. Procedures are regularly reviewed.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors strongly support the school. They inform themselves through regular visits. They bring a helpful variety of skills to benefit the school and are increasing the level of challenge which they present to leaders, who are fully held to account for school performance. Governors know precisely how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has on the progress, attainment and well-being of the pupils eligible. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching in the school and insist that progression up the pay scales is dependent on performance in the classroom. They understand the data available on pupils' attainment and progress and are aware of how the school compares to other schools locally and nationally. They are united in their aspiration to make the school outstanding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	114988
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	403252

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	634
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Reilly
Headteacher	Diane Deans
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
Telephone number	01376 331801
Fax number	01376 330060
Email address	admin@whitecourt.essex.sch.uk

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