

Great Bardfield Primary School

Braintree Road, Great Bardfield, Braintree, CM7 4RN

Inspection dates 9–10 May 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Overall, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Standards in English are rising quickly in all year groups after a dip in results last year, and they are regularly well above average in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Reception Year achieve well in all areas of learning because of good teaching and effective support from staff.
- Teaching is typically good. Lessons are well planned to make sure all groups of pupils do well. Pupils are fully involved in learning thanks to positive relationships with adults and the brisk pace of lessons.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe, and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The school's leaders are ambitious and are successfully driving improvement. They have taken successful action to improve teaching and accelerate progress in English across the school over the past year.
- The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They carry out their responsibilities effectively and are confident in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils still do better in mathematics than in English, where teachers do not yet provide consistently challenging work for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for different purposes when working in subjects other than English.
- Marking does not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work, and even where the next steps for improvement are given, pupils do not always get the opportunity to respond.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, three of which were seen together with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas. The inspector also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading to her.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 60 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books and a range of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time, and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Great Bardfield Primary is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few from minority ethnic groups and none who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. This additional funding only applies in this school to a small number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- In recent years, the number of pupils joining the school has declined significantly. As a result, the number of classes had to be reduced to five, of which four are mixed-age classes. This has led to several changes in staffing over the past two years. Staffing stabilised over the past year.
- The school is a member of a consortium of local small primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding to raise achievement further, especially in English, by making sure that:
 - the tasks set in lessons are consistently demanding but achievable for all groups of pupils
 - pupils have regular opportunities to practise writing for different purposes in different subjects, to extend the skills they learn in literacy lessons
 - all pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their work, and are given time to respond.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join this small school with levels of skills and understanding that vary from year to year but overall are broadly typical for their age. A well-planned programme of learning and careful checking of their individual progress means that by the end of the Reception class, most have achieved well in all areas of learning.
- The 2012 Year 6 national test results were significantly above average in mathematics but had dipped to average in English. These results should be treated with caution because in such a small group the results of a few pupils can have a considerable impact on overall performance data. That said, changes in staffing had affected achievement adversely, and the school responded rapidly by adopting new strategies to raise achievement in English and stabilising staffing arrangements.
- The school's data on pupils' progress for the current year and the work seen in their books and lessons show that progress in English has accelerated over the past year. This has led to a marked improvement in reading and writing standards across the school. Pupils are on track to reach higher standards at the end of Year 6 in English this year.
- Pupils in Year 1 and 2 apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to pronounce unfamiliar words and show good understanding of the stories they read. Older pupils read a range of books and review the events and characters, justifying their views confidently. A strong focus on mental mathematics and investigation is helping pupils to acquire good calculation and problem-solving skills.
- There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls, or pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils who are from minority ethnic families, or speak English as an additional language, achieve in line with other pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good progress as a result of the well-considered support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding make good progress. Last year they attained as well as the others in mathematics and were about a term behind in English, and did better than similar pupils nationally. The additional funding has been spent on extra staff who give carefully planned support to individuals or small groups of pupils to make sure they do not fall behind in their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching is now promoting good progress in English and mathematics across the school. Most parents and carers rightly think that teaching is good.
- In Reception, children are helped to become confident learners in pursuing activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They work well together in developing their reading and language skills. For example, children were seen identifying words they had learned and then successfully using those words to construct meaningful sentences.
- Teachers display good subject-specific knowledge. They make sure pupils are fully involved in their learning by asking searching questions that make them think hard as well as assessing their understanding. In a mathematics lesson with a mixed-age class from Years 4 and 5, lively

discussion and effective questions from the teacher helped pupils to gain a clear understanding of how to solve problems relating ratios to fractions.

- The teaching of reading is strong. Guided reading sessions are used well to deepen pupils' understanding of a range of stories, analysing the impact of key events and characters.
- Teachers are successfully using a new approach to promoting pupils' writing skills across the school. This has ensured that pupils write a range of stories using imaginative language. Nonetheless, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to extend the writing skills learnt in English lessons through writing for different purposes in other subjects.
- The work planned in lessons is usually well matched to the learning needs of all ability groups, and planning includes good use of support from skilful teaching assistants. Staff occasionally miss opportunities to extend pupils' skills and understanding, particularly for more-able pupils, by giving them harder work.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always include guidance on how to improve it. In some cases, next steps are suggested but pupils are not given time to respond, so they repeat the same mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and grow up as mature and confident learners. They respond well to the way the school values individuals from all backgrounds and its positive approach to managing behaviour. As a result, the school is a harmonious community. Pupils love coming to school and this is clearly reflected in their attendance, which is above average.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and get on well with learning in lessons without disruption. They try hard in lessons and usually concentrate well, although they sometimes lose focus when lesson activities are not fully challenging. They collaborate well in groups and when discussing their learning with partners.
- The pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare, but that adults deal effectively with the rare occasions when behaviour is less than good. As a result, they feel safe and secure. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that children behave well and feel happy and safe at school.
- Pupils understand the risks they face in their everyday lives. For example, they are well aware of cyber-bullying and know what to do if any should occur. Year 6 pupils attend workshops on first aid and show a good understanding of issues relating to their personal safety, such as the dangers of misusing drugs.
- Pupils' strong sense of responsibility is reflected in their commitment to the work of the school council, such as improving playground safety, and their involvement in activities such as raising funds for wildlife by adopting animals. They also take part in humanitarian projects, such as supporting children in an orphanage who have been affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by the other senior leaders, staff and the governors, communicates high expectations and has been successful in driving improvement. Together, the leaders have dealt well with the staffing issues relating to the declining number of pupils, and have ensured

that staffing has been more stable this year.

- Leaders have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This informs their improvement planning, which is appropriately focused on raising pupils' achievement further. The success of this process is clear from the faster progress pupils have made in English over the past year, and the rising standards in English.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching well against challenging individual annual performance targets for staff. A well-planned programme of training helps teachers to improve their work. Teachers are well aware that pay rises and promotion depend on how effectively they help pupils to achieve.
- Teaching across different subjects makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' key skills in literacy and numeracy. A good range of sporting activities and visits to places of interest enrich pupils' learning. The school works closely with other local schools to arrange activities such as residential trips to Hayling Island to develop pupils' independence and teamwork. Visits from a local organisation that enacts Roman and Greek lifestyles help to bring learning to life.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the way subjects are taught. It uses assemblies, religious studies and links with the local parish church well to give pupils an increasing understanding of the core values of different religions.
- The local authority has provided 'light touch' support for this good school. Membership of the consortium of local small schools has helped the staff to share and develop good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors support the school well and are committed to raising pupils' achievement. Appropriate training means that they have a clear picture of the school's performance in relation to similar schools nationally, and an accurate awareness of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They use this knowledge well to hold leaders to account for school improvement. They set challenging objectives for the headteacher and ensure that pay rewards for teachers and leaders are closely matched to performance. They are well aware of how the additional pupil premium funding is spent, and assess its impact on the achievement of the pupils for whom it is intended. The governing body ensures that requirements for safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff are implemented appropriately, and reviews them regularly to make sure they fully meet national requirements.

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	114835
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	413193

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Chapman
Headteacher	Anne Barney
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
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