

# Homerswood Primary and Nursery School

Kirklands, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7RF

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Strong leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and governors has brought about significant improvements in teaching, attendance and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants use questions to help pupils extend their understanding, with the result that standards are rising and pupils are making better progress.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. They say they feel safe. Pupils behave well both in and out of lessons.
- Children in the early years achieve well because of highly effective support from adults.
- Governors are enthusiastic and committed to school improvement. They understand pupils' performance and the quality of teaching through the effective use of questioning to challenge senior leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking in a few classes does not help pupils to improve in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Teachers in some classes set the most able pupils tasks which are too easy for them.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or part lessons. Some of these were observed jointly with the head teacher.
- The inspectors met with pupils, senior leaders, subject leaders, the early years leader, the special needs coordinator, inclusion manager, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work from Years 2, 4 and 6 and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 41 parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View and spoke to 16 parents in the school playground and three letters sent in to inspectors. The inspectors also took account of the 19 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including safeguarding policies, records and training; the school's evaluation of its own work; minutes of meetings of the governing body; attendance figures; and information about pupils' progress across the school, including in the early years.

## Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Keelan

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Homerswood Primary and Nursery School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has a Nursery which children attend part time. Children attend full time in the Reception Year.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- There have been many changes to the staff in the last four years.
- There is a pre-school on the premises but this is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school has a before- and after-school club which is separately run and subject to a separate inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make the best progress possible by ensuring all teachers:
  - set suitably demanding work for the most-able pupils is set consistently in order to challenge and extend their learning
  - use marking to help improve pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have relentlessly pursued their focus to raise standards in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. This has resulted in improved standards and, despite difficulties due to many changes in staffing, improved the quality of teaching. They have created an atmosphere in the school where staff and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are able to flourish, and where teaching and behaviour are good.
- Senior and subject leaders provide good leadership. They check teaching frequently and give individual feedback to teachers on how to improve their work. The local authority has supported subject leaders in ensuring that they know what makes effective teaching. This has brought about improvement since the last inspection.
- Some subject leaders have been appointed recently but have a good grasp of the strengths and areas to improve within their subject area. They observe lessons, scrutinise books and offer advice through staff meetings and on an individual basis. This has proved successful in improving the quality of teaching especially in the teaching of phonics, the sounds that letters represent.
- Leaders' views of the school's effectiveness are accurate and link well to the school improvement plan and training for staff. Subject leaders have their own action plans which identify strengths and weaknesses in their subject area and how to improve. These action plans are all closely linked to the budget and training for teachers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are also well supported in the classroom or individually. The inclusion manager and the headteacher have ensured that teaching and non-teaching staff are well trained to help pupils. Staff are confident and competent at delivering one-to-one or small-group teaching to help pupils catch up. As a result, the school has a large bank of knowledge and approaches to further meet the needs of these pupils.
- The school has a strong commitment to equal opportunity for all the pupils. They organised an 'Equality week' when a range of visitors with different disabilities spoke to the pupils about how they overcame their disability to achieve. The school does not tolerate any discrimination.
- Pupil premium funding is used for well-targeted programmes to support groups or individuals of eligible pupils. These are very carefully monitored to ensure pupils make the best progress. Meetings take place each half term to consider pupils' progress and any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and extra support put in place. This is very effective and disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- The curriculum is good with a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of the values, such as democracy and the importance of obeying the law, that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Staff have received training for the new curriculum from the local authority and have adapted what pupils learn accordingly. Senior leaders are keen to celebrate all pupils' achievements, including achievements outside school, to raise pupils' aspirations to know what can be done if they try.
- The school's curriculum is further enhanced by links with organisations such as the National Trust and enrichment days for more-able and talented pupils. Pupils have visited Cambridge University, the British Library to see the Magna Carta and the Science Museum to have an opportunity to be young scientists. A farm brought several animals to school for a week for the pupils to see and handle to further enrich their learning experiences.
- A wide range of clubs and trips, including those to different places of worship help pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils respect each other and all adults because adults respect them. Teachers and governors seek the views and opinion of pupils through questionnaires and conversations with groups in school.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used effectively. The headteacher and governors

provide extra coaching for swimming to ensure that every child leaves the school a swimmer. Links with the local secondary school ensure that pupils have the opportunity to play in inter-school competitions to further develop their physical skills and promote personal well-being. During the inspection the school won a netball match for the first time causing great excitement. Pupils took part in a dance festival and choreographed their own routines.

- Home learning is an important part of the school week. Topics to learn are set on a Tuesday to be returned the following Monday. The new policy was developed with parents, pupils, staff and governors. This has ensured that there is now 95% return of homework each week. Pupils have the opportunity to join a home learning club on a Friday if they are struggling or find it difficult to work at home.
- In order to reach family members and encourage and motivate pupils, senior leaders organise two afternoons during the year especially for grandparents, ladies, aunts and mothers (GLAM afternoon) and fathers, uncles, dads and grandfathers (FUDG afternoon). These are additional to the open approach the school has to parents who can meet teachers at the beginning or end of the school day.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors access additional safeguarding courses to deepen knowledge and understanding to ensure pupils and staff are safe.
- Senior leaders have put in place a marking policy which staff are using in most classes. Books are monitored by subject leaders. However, in a few classes and in subjects other than English and mathematics marking is not yet consistent.
- The local authority has supported the school well. Individual advisors have contributed to improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. The local authority has now stepped back from intensive support and makes three standard visits a year.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are enthusiastic and keen to ensure that pupils make the best progress and that teaching is of the highest quality. They visit the school regularly and take every opportunity to access training. Governors are fully aware of the attainment of the pupils in the school and how this compares to pupils nationally. This includes pupils eligible for the pupil premium and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Governors have specific areas of responsibility to closely monitor and report back to the full governing body. This includes funding for pupil premium and for the sports grant as well as subject areas. Subject leaders report to the governing body on the development of their action plan and the impact this is having on raising standards.
- Governors manage the budget well. They are fully aware of how the performance of teachers links to pay and progression in the profession. They know what is being done to tackle any underperformance.
- Governors have their own section of the school development plan which is a monthly agenda item. They monitor the progress of the school's plan avidly. One governor meets regularly with the headteacher to ensure safeguarding requirements are met and the site is safe. Parents' opinions are valued and every opportunity is taken to be open with everyone.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that they are proud of their school. A child said, 'If I could choose a school it would be this one because everyone is welcome and everyone matters'. This encapsulates the school's philosophy well.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and take responsibilities very seriously. There is a group of Year 6 leaders called 'Jibber Jabber Leaders'. Each week they talk to four or five pupils from each class about any issues which may have arisen and any up-coming events. They play one or two games and are very conscious that they must make the pupils feel comfortable and relaxed in order to have full conversations. They

have discussed the use of some funding for playground equipment with the result that there is now a pirate ship climbing frame and some 'mushrooms' seating.

- Pupils understand right from wrong and show great consideration for each other. They listen attentively to adults and to each other. Pupils understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions well. They are keen to explain that they get rewards for being good at something and being positive.
- Instances of inappropriate behaviour are rare; very occasionally when tasks set for pupils are not as interesting as usual, a few pupils lose their concentration.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They take care with the presentation of their work and strive to improve their handwriting. Books are kept clean and neat.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance which is now average. The office staff make telephone calls to parents on the first day of absence and rewards systems are in place to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The school keeps track of all pupils who leave and does not take pupils off roll until they have confirmation from their new school that they have arrived safely.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All educational trips are well documented and assessed thoroughly for risks to pupils and staff. All visitors are securely signed in and out of the premises.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe and are happy in school. They say that bullying is rare but know what to do should it occur. Pupils say that their teachers would notice if someone was unhappy or very quiet and would talk to them. They value the fact that they can talk to their teacher at the beginning or end of the school day in confidence. Parents also value the accessibility to teachers and staff at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Pupils understand the many ways to keep themselves safe including the use of mobile 'phones and the internet. They understand the danger in crossing the road and say that name-calling does not occur. 'It just would not happen in this school!'
- Safeguarding is secure. The vast majority of parents feel that their child is kept safe in school.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- There have been many changes in staff due to staff leaving or being promoted to other schools. In spite of this the headteacher and governors have maintained their vision for high quality teaching to raise pupils' attainment. They have successfully supported new staff with clear induction programmes and have also received support from the local authority with the result that the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and offer a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning skills which encourage pupils to think carefully and extend their learning.
- Reading and writing have been a focus in the school. The school has adopted a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics and trained all adults to be clear and accurate in their use of sounds. This has ensured that pupils gain the necessary understanding to unpick difficult words and read and spell them successfully.
- Writing is taught well and in all subjects, not just English. Teachers encourage pupils to clarify their thoughts by talking to a partner. Teachers give time for pupils to discuss what they are learning and new vocabulary is introduced that pupils immediately use in their writing, as well as developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve and give pupils plenty of opportunities to apply their newly learnt skills to unfamiliar situations.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils, but in some classes teachers do not expect enough of the most able and set them tasks which are too easy.
- In some classes marking is good. It shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work. However, this is not consistent across the school and across subjects. The school has rightly concentrated on marking in writing and mathematics and there is some consistency seen in most pupils' books for English and mathematics but this is not the case in other subjects, for example, in history and geography.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 end-of-year assessments was average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. This was lower than the previous year's results. The school is able to identify the reasons for this drop in attainment. The school's own data and pupils' books indicate that results are on track to rise again this year in all subjects.
- Pupils performed much better in the Year 1 phonic screening test in 2014 and results were above average. Results were almost double the percentage reaching the expected standard in 2013.
- Progress at Key Stage 2 is good. Results in 2014 showed that pupils underachieved in mathematics. This was the result of weak teaching in the past, which the school's leaders have successfully tackled. The progress made by Key Stage 2 pupils has increased in each year group in reading, writing and mathematics, so that they are now making consistently good progress. Current school data has been moderated by the local authority. This data and pupils' books indicate that in 2015 all pupils are on track to make at least the progress expected for their age in reading and writing with a higher proportion making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported by trained teaching assistants and teachers either in small groups or one-to-one. They make good progress overall but their attainment remained below their classmates and pupils nationally. In 2014 disadvantaged pupils were six terms behind their classmates and seven terms behind all pupils nationally in mathematics. In reading and writing they were broadly four terms behind their classmates and pupils nationally. In this particular group, most were also pupils who were disabled or who had special educational needs. Their progress is now accelerating in line with that of other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have educational special needs make good progress across the school because they are identified early and extra support is given in the class or one-to-one. They are closely monitored to ensure they make the progress expected.
- The most-able pupils make similar good progress to their classmates. An increasing number achieved the higher levels of attainment in 2014 but not enough reached the highest levels of attainment because in some classes the work set for them was not difficult enough due to historic teaching issues.
- The school has focused on reading and writing and the introduction of a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. This has been successful. Pupils enjoy reading and read well from books which are at the appropriate levels. Older pupils talk excitedly about their favourite authors and the types of book they enjoy with the result that current school data show a few pupils are expected to get to the highest levels in the end of key stage tests.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Most children enter the Nursery with significant gaps in their development so that they are below what is typical for their age, especially in communication, literacy and mathematical skills. They progress well through good teaching and an increasing number reach average levels of attainment by the end of the

Reception Year.

- Girls achieve better than boys. Teachers are addressing this by providing more opportunities for boys to experiment in the outside area with letters and shapes. Children make good progress from their starting points but some children remain below what is typical for their age in reading, writing and mathematics when they join Key Stage 1. The majority of children are ready to join Key Stage 1 and the next stage in their education.
- Leadership and management are good. The early years leader is new to the school but has a wealth of experience with the age group. She understands the strengths of the setting and has already initiated links with the Nursery teacher to plan some activities with her. There are also good links with the pre-school which shares part of the premises.
- Teaching is good. Activities are well organised and provide experiences to ensure more children than previously move toward the early learning goals expected for their age. Teachers and other adults have a good understanding of how children learn.
- Adults continually talk to the children and question them to develop their speaking and listening skills and develop vocabulary appropriate to their learning experiences. For example, during a phonics lesson, children learnt that donkeys bray. They used their hands on their heads for donkey ears and made the 'ee or' sounds. When asked later what sound a donkey makes they were able to repeat 'ee or' showing good learning.
- Outside the activities cover all areas of learning and the Nursery and the Reception classes have their own secure areas for children to play. Once a week this is opened up and the children are able to mingle and play together. Also once a week they enter the main school hall for music and singing together. This ensures there is a smooth transition from Nursery to Reception.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Risk assessments take place to ensure that all areas are safe. Children know to wash their hands before taking their snack and after toileting. They have the choice to wear wellingtons when outside and a variety of sizes are freely available. This gives an opportunity to discuss and sort sizes and numbers as well as keeping safe in the wet.
- Children behave well and quickly stop what they are doing to listen to the teacher or another adult. They are engaged in the activities provided and move easily from one activity to another. They take turns without fuss and care about each other. One child said she was cold and another was heard to say, 'You need a cardy' showing developing emotional and social skill.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117252
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	462095

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Jarvis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Shirley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 320610
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