

Beechfield School

Gammons Lane, Watford, WD24 5TY

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2013

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 enjoy their lessons at Beechfield. They are interested in new ideas, and excited when they learn new skills.
- Achievement is good. Pupils' rate of progress has improved since the last inspection and is now good at all key stages.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 has improved, and Year 6 test results are now above the national average.
- Lessons are clearly structured so pupils understand what they have to do.
- Additional adult support for pupils who find learning difficult is effective in helping them to achieve well.
- Marking in books is regular, thorough, and makes it clear to pupils what they have to do to improve.
- Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and they get on well with each other. They treat each other with respect.
- Staff have responded to the headteacher's high expectations so that teaching has improved. It is now good and sometimes outstanding.
- Leaders, managers and governors keep a close eye on how pupils are doing and take action to stop them falling behind.
- A number of pupils arrive at the school mid-term. They settle in well and make progress quickly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils do not make as much progress in reading, as they do writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is not consistent.
- Leadership and management is not yet organised to meet the needs of a school with increasing pupil numbers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons or part lessons, taught by 12 teachers. Six lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's documents on self-evaluation and safeguarding. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and the tracking system used to monitor their progress.
- Inspectors considered the 15 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, and the questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Graham Gossage	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Beechfield is an average-sized primary school.
- The school is half way through an expansion from a one-form to a two-form entry school. It is currently undergoing significant building work.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The number of pupils who arrive at the school mid-term or mid-year is higher than in primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has a Nursery which provides part-time places for up to 30 children in each of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- All pupils are educated on site. The school does not use alternative provision to support any of its pupils.
- Apart from the headteacher, all the senior leadership team have only been in post from January 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all phonics lessons are planned and taught in a consistent way
 - setting pupils demanding targets for improving their understanding of letters and the sounds they make
 - checking phonics lessons to make sure that letters and sounds are taught consistently, and that pupils are reaching their targets.
- Improve the rate of progress and the amount of outstanding teaching in both key stages by:
 - restructuring the leadership and management team in response to the school's expansion and the fact that staff are new to their role
 - creating more leadership and management capacity to check on teaching and progress, and take action to bring about rapid improvement
 - training up new members of the leadership and management team so that they are able to bring about improvements in teaching and achievement to the same extent as the headteacher.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills and understanding that are below those typically expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social, and emotional development, because their relationships with each other and adults are positive.
- Pupils attain well at Key Stage 2, and make good progress. Progress in writing at Key Stage 2 has improved since the previous inspection because pupils are given a lot more opportunities to write at length and are taught how to check and improve the accuracy of their writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make as good progress as their peers, and sometimes their progress is outstanding. The school is very quick to recognise if they have any gaps in understanding, and provides small-group sessions which help them to close the gaps.
- The standards that pupils who are eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium achieve are as high, or sometimes higher than, their peers. The school targets these pupils for attendance at extra clubs before and after school to avoid the risk of their underachievement. As a result, they make rapid progress over their time at the school.
- The majority of pupils who arrive at the school mid-term or mid-year speak English as an additional language and many are at an early stage of learning English. They make rapid progress. This is because the school is very effective at working out the level of their skills and understanding, and providing tasks and activities which are specific to each individual. One pupil who came to the school mid-year speaking little English said, 'As soon as I arrived, they found out that I was clever at maths, and gave me the hardest sums. But I could do them.'
- More-able pupils do well. For example, in Year 6, in English, the more-able pupils are expected to use highly complex language to analyse difficult texts.
- Although progress is good overall in Year 1, pupils do not perform as well as pupils nationally in their assessment at the end of Year 1 on phonics (linking letters with sounds). Because letters and sounds are not taught in the same way in each year group, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of from year to year.
- Attainment overall at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with national averages, although attainment in mathematics and writing is better than reading. Progress at Key Stage 1 is good, particularly in mathematics, because pupils are given activities which help them to solve problems independently.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan lessons well, so that activities are suitable for every pupil's needs. Lessons are organised so that pupils are supported to work through different stages of a piece of writing or a calculation on their own. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson on symmetry, the class worked through their steps to success, enabling pupils to work independently, without asking for help. 'I am not going to have to stop to ask what to do now,' one pupil said.

- Pupils are asked questions, and are encouraged to ask their own questions, which deepen their knowledge. In a Year 3 science lesson, two pupils reviewed their understanding of the difference between rocks and soils by working out difficult questions to ask their peers.
- In all subjects, books are marked in a way which celebrates pupils' success and helps them to improve. Year 5 and 6 pupils explained to an inspector how useful they found the teacher's recommendations for improvement, and how they always tried to act upon them.
- Pupils learn particularly well in mathematics because of teachers' strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, more-able pupils made outstanding progress because the teacher had the expertise to plan an activity which placed demands on their understanding of decimal points.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are supported to come up with their own ideas about how to learn. When asked how to tell the story of Goldilocks to her friends in an interesting way, one girl suggested that they all take a part and act it out. Her friends were very excited about her idea.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. Adults ensure that they are fully included in group activities so they get the chance to learn from their peers.
- For some pupils, particularly in Year 2, the teaching of letters and sounds is outstanding. However, this is not the case across all of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Letters and sounds are taught in a variety of ways for different groups of pupils, so it is difficult sometimes for pupils to make quick progress when they move group. Pupils do not have demanding targets for their achievement in understanding letters and sounds.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils get on very well with each other. At the time of the inspection, because of the building works, outside space was limited. Nevertheless, girls and boys played well with each other, they respected each other's need for space, and relations between pupils and adults were good.
- Parents and staff feel the school is a safe place to be, and pupils said they would recommend the school to their friends because of how safe and happy it is.
- Pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups and they appreciate that it is a priority for the school that everyone should be treated equally. One Year 5 pupil said, 'Lots of people come to this school at lots of different times. The school gives us all a chance to do our best.'
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are particularly skilled at discussing ideas in pairs or threes, and are always willing to work with each other.
- Pupils think there is a lot less bullying since the last inspection, and they believe that it is now rare. They understand what bullying is, and what to do to stop it happening.
- If pupils arrive at the school with difficulties in managing their own behaviour, the school is very successful at improving the way they behave. This is because the school has a very clear system for maintaining good behaviour, which pupils find helpful and easy to follow.
- The school has a counsellor who works effectively with pupils to help them take responsibility for

improving their own behaviour, and understand when and why their behaviour has not been as good as it should be.

- Sometimes, when the bell goes in the playground, pupils do not immediately follow instructions.

The leadership and management are good

- Because of action taken by leaders and managers, teaching, behaviour and achievement have improved since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved because outstanding teachers have shown their colleagues what the best teaching is like and worked with them to improve how they teach.
- Teachers feel that their targets set by the headteacher challenge them to ensure that pupils in their class make progress which is at least good. Each teacher is set a target for the progress of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. This helps the school evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding.
- The headteacher holds regular meetings with all teachers to discuss the progress of any pupils who are falling behind and to identify strategies to improve their achievement. The headteacher follows up to see whether these strategies have worked.
- The headteacher works in close partnership with the local authority. The local authority has supported the headteacher to accurately identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and plan appropriate actions to counter the weaknesses.
- The range of subjects and activities available for the pupils has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are enthusiastic about the clubs on offer before and after school. One Key Stage 1 pupil said, 'You can do stuff from right at the beginning of the day to the end of the day if you want to. And I want to.'
- The headteacher checks on the quality of teaching and progress. As the school expands, she will not have the capacity to do this alone. Some leaders and managers, who are new in post, do not yet have the skills, enough time allocated, or the level of responsibility, to support the headteacher to check the quality of teaching and progress, and take action to bring about outstanding teaching and progress in a bigger school.
- The school prioritises the pupils' social and emotional development. The school counsellor and outside organisations work with pupils to make sure that they can explain clearly how they feel to their friends and adults no matter what their first language is. Pupils are encouraged to be confident and stand up for themselves. 'We are all courageous here,' one Key Stage 2 pupil said.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors understand what makes good teaching. Each governor has oversight of a school priority for improvement, and they visit the school regularly to check if the priority is being met. They understand what the school's information tells them about pupils' progress. They set the headteacher demanding targets to bring about improvement and fully support the headteacher in relating pay progression for teachers to pupil progress. Governors regularly review whether the pupil premium funding, which is used to fund small-group English and mathematics sessions, and pupils' attendance at clubs and on trips, impacts on pupils' progress. The headteacher reports to them how successfully the pupils eligible for pupil premium are meeting their targets.

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	117094
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	405685

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	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glenn Gibsone
Headteacher	Lisa Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2011
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