

Hatfield Community Free School

Briars Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 8ES

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above age-related expectations in the Reception Year and in Year 1. This is because pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and consistently teach lessons that interest, excite and inspire pupils to learn.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching very thoroughly. They set ambitious targets and provide teachers with very effective support so that they can reach them. This has led to outstanding achievement for pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school, work hard and are very keen to do well.
- Senior leaders have created a safe, caring and supportive school which enables pupils to thrive.
- The governing body know the school very well. Governors actively support the school and rigorously monitor its work.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all six classes. Ten lessons were observed, including several seen jointly with the Principal. The inspector also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector took account of 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 23 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- Assessment data for the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2013 were analysed. The inspector scrutinised current assessment data, pupils' work, teachers' planning, minutes of meetings and policies, safeguarding documentation and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- The inspector met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, parents, pupils and four members of the governing body.
- The inspector checked safeguarding records, alongside documentation such as the child protection policy and risk assessments.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school opened in September 2012 with 60 children in three Reception Year classes. In September 2013, a further 60 pupils joined the school. There are currently six classes. The school is set to have the full primary age range by 2018.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school has already adopted the requirements of the new national curriculum, due to come into effect in September 2014.
- The age range of pupils in the school in 2013 meant that it was not eligible for additional government Primary Sports Funding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop teachers' expertise in assessing and measuring pupils' progress when applying the requirements of the school's chosen curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils joined the Reception Year in 2012 with skills and knowledge that were well below those typical for their age. They made exceptionally good progress and, at the end of their Reception Year, over 80% met the early learning goals in all areas and achieved a good level of development. This is significantly higher than the national average. Many pupils made even more progress and exceeded the early learning goals.
- The progress made by these pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been sustained in Year 1. Half of them are currently working at levels above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at a level which is below that expected for their age is very small.
- Pupils currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage joined the school with slightly higher levels of skill and knowledge than for the previous year. They are on track to achieve higher standards than last year and many are already working at the standard expected in Year 1.
- Pupils read very well and make exceptionally good use of the strategies that they have been taught. When encountering a new or difficult word, they are adept at breaking it down into separate sounds, before re-building it into the whole word. For example, when a pupil in Year 1 came across the word 'passageway'. After carefully identifying the sounds, she put it back together and read the whole word accurately. This systematic approach to reading is well-established across the school and is enabling pupils to make very rapid progress.
- Lessons are full of pupils' enthusiasm and excitement. Pupils are very keen to learn and want to share knowledge with one another. In the 'Discovery Garden', which is part of the school's outdoor learning area, one boy was amazed when he created a very large bubble. He followed it, drawing other children with him and then led a group along with the teacher as they sought to make more giant bubbles, identifying which colours they contain, and what shapes they make as they float.
- The subject themes studied by the pupils enthuse and ignite their interest. Year 1, for example, have chosen 'the circus' as the focus of their learning. They are using this to learn history, geography, art, music and technology. In addition, their learning in this theme links to mathematics and English so they practise the skills that they learn in a meaningful and enjoyable manner across a range of subjects.
- There are no attainment gaps between pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils. Teachers and senior leaders track the progress that all pupils make very closely, so that any pupil who is at risk of falling behind is provided with additional support.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make very good progress. Almost all are working at expected levels and some are working at levels above those expected for their age.
- Pupils are quick to settle in lessons. They listen well and show resilience when facing challenging problems. They encourage one another and are quick to celebrate the achievements of their classmates. In Year 1, pupils are now so involved in their own learning that teachers have recently started to ask them to set their own targets for their next lesson. These 'next steps' are looked at before the lessons start so that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils can explain their next steps and are keen to achieve them.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers plan very carefully, providing experiences that enable groups and individual pupils to make as much progress as they can. They are vigilant for opportunities for pupils to extend their learning, and impress upon pupils the importance of working as hard as they can.
- Pupils make very rapid progress because teachers do not limit the amount that they can learn. Consequently, many pupils are working at a level normally expected of a pupil one and sometimes two years older. Teachers expect pupils to learn, understand and use mathematical terms at an early age. Pupils in the Reception class can explain lines of symmetry in shapes, and identify other shapes that are asymmetrical. They can solve problems and use number lines independently. In Year 1, pupils are handling data in Venn diagrams, bar charts, tallies and line graphs. They accurately identify halves and quarters of shapes and can tell the time.
- Reading is taught exceptionally well. As a result, pupils quickly learn the systems that are needed to make rapid progress, and relish finding new and 'tricky' words to read.
- Classrooms are calm, well-managed and very well organised. This means that pupils quickly acquire important independent skills so that if, for example, they need a number-line to help them with a mathematical problem, they know where to find it and how to use it.
- Teachers provide pupils with very clear guidance and feedback. They mark their work regularly and talk to pupils about what they need to do next. Pupils value this feedback and many talk about it with enthusiasm.
- Teachers and 'learning support practitioners' (teaching assistants) set superb examples for pupils to follow. As role-models, they demonstrate absolute enthusiasm for learning in all its different guises. No opportunities are missed to nurture positive attitudes to school. Pupils walking to an assembly, for example, will still be quietly talking to a teacher about the lesson that has just ended, or discussing a piece of homework that they have enjoyed. This enthusiasm extends beyond the normal school day, when staff lay on a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are very well attended.
- Teachers make very good use of the available outdoor space in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Activities are purposeful and linked closely to the work that pupils do in the class. This enables ongoing conversations about learning between teachers and pupils. The activities that pupils choose to do are well-monitored, and teachers plan their own time well to allow flexibility, so that they can respond to the interests of pupils.
- The school has chosen to adopt the new national curriculum, due to be formally introduced across schools in England in September 2014. This is at an early stage of development and teachers are assessing pupils' work using this new framework. The new nature of the curriculum means that assessment has changed and teachers are currently working together to improve consistency.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is true both in class and around the school. They are very polite with each other and with staff. Doors are held open for people without being asked, and 'please' and 'thank-you' are rarely forgotten.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are overwhelmingly positive. Parents speak of pupils being very

upset when they are ill because it means that they will have to miss school. One pupil captured the enthusiasm of many when he commented that, 'We are the luckiest pupils in the world because we go to this school'.

- Pupils' enjoyment of school has a very positive impact on their learning. This is reflected in the high take-up of places for two additional weeks of learning which occur during the summer holiday. In 2013, 65% of pupils attended these two weeks. This has risen to 80% for 2014.
- Pupils value the opportunities to attend after-school clubs very highly. When asked what they like doing the most, several pupils simply responded with one word – 'everything!'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Very clear systems for assuring pupils' well-being are in place and are regularly reviewed. Pupils are well known as individuals across the school and communication with parents and carers is excellent.
- Attendance rates are high. Clear systems exist to establish the cause of any absence which does occur.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal provides outstanding leadership, which is central to all of the school's work. Her vision is shared by the staff, who all responded in the most positive terms to the staff questionnaire issued during the inspection. One wrote, 'I could not be happier anywhere else'. The impact of this is felt across the school, because all staff consistently place the best interest of pupils at the centre of their work.
- The Principal is well supported by a recently appointed vice-principal. Working together, they have a very strong understanding of the school's work and have a detailed and clear development plan for the future. This plan takes into account the way that the school will grow in size over the next few years.
- Ensuring that teaching is as good as it can be is the key priority for school leaders. Initially, the Principal and vice-principal took the main leadership roles, but arrangements are in place for other staff to take on more responsibility. All leaders monitor the quality of teaching by making sure that they are present in classrooms on a regular basis. Pupils' work is scrutinised and careful checks are kept on their progress. Teachers feel strongly supported by senior leaders, who frequently teach alongside them.
- The school provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This begins every day with 'wake and shake,' when all pupils and staff share a dance routine, encouraging positive attitudes to both exercise and social activities. Assemblies are times of celebration and reflection, where pupils' moral understanding is strengthened through stories and discussion.
- Parents are very positive about the school and its leadership. All who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to other parents. Individual parents spoke of how the school had made an enormous difference to their child, in terms of both their learning and how positively they view their education. Parents also told the inspector that they value highly the daily contact they can have with the Principal, and commend the comprehensive and personalised communications between home and school.
- Safeguarding systems and procedures meet statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are highly effective. They know the school well and plan for the future alongside school leaders. They are committed to maintaining the school's very clear set of values as it grows in the coming years.
- Governors hold the school to account for all that it does. The minutes of meetings illustrate the scope of their involvement, which ranges from checking on staff morale to monitoring the data that shows how well pupils who are involved with outside agencies are progressing.
- Governors check on safeguarding procedures and the condition of the school site on a regular basis.
- Governors check that school leaders complete the annual review of teachers' pay. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. Procedures are in place to tackle any underperformance of teaching staff.
- Governors have checked on the impact of pupil premium spending, and are reassured that there is no gap between the learning of this group of pupils and others.

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	138201
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425156

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Jones
Principal	Dr Sue Attard
Telephone number	01707 276018
Fax number	01707 276018
Email address	principal@hatfieldcommunityfreeschool.org.uk

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