

Ightham Primary School

Oldbury Lane, Ightham, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 9DD

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is much higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from good teaching and make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership. He has secured significant improvement in teaching and the quality of pupils' work. As a result of teachers' high expectations, pupils' good achievement has been sustained.
- Staff fully share the headteacher's ambitions for the school. They have risen to the challenge to improve their practice.
- Middle leaders' roles have developed rapidly. The leaders are knowledgeable about teaching and learning and make an increasingly effective contribution to school development.
- Children make very rapid progress in the early years because of high quality provision and outstanding leadership.
- Pupils are polite, interested in learning and proud of their school. They behave well and understand what they can do to help to keep themselves safe. All parents who completed the on-line questionnaire feel that their children are happy and secure.
- Teaching assistants skilfully support pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers and understand pupils' needs very well.
- Pupils are looked after very well in the breakfast and after-school clubs. Those pupils who attend enjoy interesting, good quality activities.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's work. They provide good levels of support and challenge for school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure the highest levels of achievement.
- Teachers do not always systematically check pupils' understanding or ask questions which fully challenge pupils of different abilities.
- Middle leaders' roles in improving the quality of teaching are not yet fully developed.
- Outstanding teaching practice is not shared as much as it should be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons or part lessons, including four joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three additional governors. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, they considered the views expressed by parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and considered a range of policies and documents. These included the school’s improvement plan, information about pupils’ progress, attendance records, and safeguarding policies and procedures. Inspectors also looked at samples of the governing body minutes.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils’ work provided by the school, as well as in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Rudman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. There are very few eligible pupils in Year 6. Pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school provides full-time early years provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club, both of which are managed by the school and were included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' achievement is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers systematically check and explore pupils' understanding during lessons and ask questions which fully challenge pupils of different abilities
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from outstanding teaching in the school.
- Strengthen middle leaders' roles in developing the quality of teaching by giving teachers high quality support and coaching.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have ensured that pupils continue to achieve well. The headteacher provides strong leadership of teaching. He is effectively supported by senior and middle leaders and has quickly identified the need to improve aspects of teaching. He has secured strong improvements in teachers' and leaders' expectations of their own practice and of pupils' work. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly and pupils are making faster progress. An element of weaker teaching has been eradicated. Teachers have welcomed increased levels of accountability and responsibility for pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher understands what individual teachers need to do to improve their practice and training is used effectively. For example, he has ensured that teachers visit other schools to observe and learn from outstanding practice. However, there are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from strong teaching already in the school.
- Performance management procedures are robust. Individual staff targets are appropriately linked to improving pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher, in partnership with fellow headteachers, has developed a clear and manageable system for assessing and checking pupils' progress. Procedures have been shared with staff, governors and parents and are now in use throughout the school.
- Middle leaders have, until recently, played a limited part in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching. They have worked closely with the headteacher to develop their role. As a result, they are now beginning to check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subject area. They are beginning to look at pupils' books, discuss pupils' progress with teachers and senior leaders and observe teaching and learning. This has contributed strongly to the school's recent development. However, there are too few opportunities for teachers to improve their practice by observing middle leaders or by working alongside them in the classroom.
- After-school and breakfast clubs are well managed and provide safe and welcoming care for those pupils who attend. Appealing activities and good quality resources ensure that pupils are happily occupied and behave extremely well. Relationships in both settings are excellent, with high levels of mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- The school does not tolerate discrimination. Pupils of different backgrounds and abilities get on very well together. Leaders ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to achieve well. Additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' personal and academic development. For example, funded places in sports clubs help to develop pupils' self-esteem, whilst individual teaching for pupils enables them to make good progress in literacy and mathematics.
- The use of visits and visitors successfully enriches pupils' learning so that pupils are interested and keen to learn more. Appreciation of the arts and creative skills are strongly promoted and make an important contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils regularly benefit from using the school's woodland area to enhance their learning, from the youngest children in Reception to those in Year 6.
- The school makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils in all year groups have regular opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas during lessons to develop personal and social skills. This helps pupils to reflect on the impact of their actions on others and supports the development of personal opinions. Pupils are prepared very well for life in modern Britain because the school is very successful in developing pupils' awareness of British values. For example, a recent magistrate's visit helped pupils in Year 6 to appreciate aspects of the justice system.
- Pupils are mature and responsible individuals by the time they leave Year 6. Good progress and above average levels of attainment ensure they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Sports funding is used well. The school excels in the teaching of sport and regularly achieves success in competitions. Teachers work alongside specialist sports coaches to develop their own skills in teaching physical education and pupils benefit from a wide range of sports clubs.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school. For example, training and courses for middle leaders have successfully supported developments in their roles. Regular visits to the school mean that the local authority has an accurate view of the school's strengths and development needs.
- The school is an attractive and positive place for staff and pupils to work and learn. The local authority, parents and staff express confidence in the school's leadership. Parents provide strong support for the school and its work.
- Leaders have improved safeguarding arrangements and increased site security. For example, procedures for visitors to the school have been tightened and the school gates are opened and closed at set times. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. Policies have been updated and staff are appropriately

trained.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body shares the headteacher’s aspirations for the school. The governors routinely consider the headteacher’s reports about pupils’ progress. However, in addition to this good quality information, governors check and discuss the progress pupils make in every year group and compare their achievement with those in other schools nationally. As a result, they know the school’s strengths and clearly understand how the school’s work can be improved. The governing body’s checks on the quality of teaching and learning include reviews of pupils’ work, visits to lessons and discussions with middle leaders and other members of staff. Activities such as these mean that governors have an accurate first hand view of the quality of teaching in different year groups. They are understandably proud of recent improvements, particularly in the quality of marking and pupils’ work. Governors know how additional funds such as the primary sport and the pupil premium are spent and how successfully these are used to support achievement. Governors are well informed about salary progression for staff and how performance management procedures are used to support teachers’ practice. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body attended a recent meeting with the headteacher and the local authority and governors have been involved in updating the pay policy. They are well informed about the successful steps taken to address an element of weaker teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave exceptionally well during playtimes and when moving between lessons. They are respectful, considerate and polite. Almost all those parents who completed the online questionnaire consider pupils to be well behaved.
- Pupils are keen to do well and present their work with care. They are proud of their school and look after their surroundings responsibly. For example, they enjoy looking after the school garden and are understandably irritated if they find any litter in the woodland area.
- Most pupils behave very well during lessons. However, occasionally, a few make slower progress when they lose concentration and teachers are not quick enough to remind them to get on with their work.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Records indicate that incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they told inspectors that they know ‘not to keep it to yourself’ if they have any concerns.
- Leaders have effectively strengthened pupils’ understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet. Pupils have a confident awareness of some of the steps they can take to reduce the risks.
- Pupils have regular supervised access to all outdoor areas, including the woodland on the school site. This is helping them to develop a sensible view of risk and of what they can do to keep safe.
- Pupils are punctual and attendance rates are consistently above average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers’ determination to develop their practice and their willingness to take on board new ideas have been key factors in the rapid improvements made during the past term and a half.
- Teachers’ expectations have increased, leading to substantial improvements in pupils’ work. Teachers set work which effectively challenges pupils of different abilities to do their best, including the most able.
- Teachers often use questions skilfully during lessons to check pupils’ understanding and to make changes to tasks in response to pupils’ needs. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, pupils’ understanding is not checked systematically and pupils are not asked questions which challenge them to think more deeply at their own level; as a result, their progress slows.
- The quality of marking has improved. Teachers regularly mark pupils’ work to a high standard. They routinely use marking to show pupils what they need to do next to improve their work and to give them extra challenges. Pupils read and act on this advice and, as a result, are making faster progress than previously.

- Teachers plan interesting and stimulating lessons and pupils say that 'learning is fun'. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good.
- Teachers have increased opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills by completing longer pieces of writing. Phonics teaching (the sounds that letters make) has been extended from Key Stage 1 into the older year groups, and the teaching of punctuation and grammar has been strengthened. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident and more accurate in their use of language.
- The teaching of reading has improved so there is a more consistent approach across the school. Leaders have increased the number of good quality books available in school. This is successfully capitalising on pupils' appetite for reading, with more pupils able to take books home.
- Resources have been purchased to help pupils to develop a better understanding of mathematical concepts. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills to solve problems.
- Teaching assistants provide confident and knowledgeable support for pupils of differing abilities. They work closely with teachers and understand pupils' individual needs very well.
- While some teaching is highly effective, there is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure pupils secure the highest levels of achievement. Teachers do not yet have enough opportunities to observe and learn from existing high quality teaching in the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The knowledge and skills of children when they enter Reception are generally typical for their age. They make excellent progress to reach levels which are much higher than expected by the end of the Reception class. As a result, they are extremely well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils are keenly interested in books and make good progress in the development of reading skills. They confidently and happily discuss favourite authors and enjoy sharing books with their friends. Attainment in reading is consistently above average at both key stages, substantially so in 2014.
- The effective teaching of phonics (the letters sounds make) means that the results of the Year 1 phonic check have been above average for the past two years, with an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in 2014.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Attainment in mathematics has been rising at the end Year 2 and Year 6 for the past three years and is typically well above average.
- In the past, pupils made slower progress in writing than in reading and mathematics, particularly during Key Stage 2. In 2014, pupils' attainment was average at the end of Year 6. Until recently, teachers' expectations of pupils' written work were too low. As a result, pupils took less care with their work, which was too often untidy and of poor quality.
- Rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, including raised expectations, mean that pupils now take a pride in their work and their progress is accelerating. Standards are rising, with more pupils on track to achieve expected levels at the end of Year 6 in 2015.
- Until recently, the most able pupils in the school made slower progress than their classmates. This was because teachers' expectations were not always high enough and the work set was sometimes too easy. Teachers' increased expectations mean that the tasks set are more challenging, so that the most able make better progress than previously. Work in books shows that substantially more pupils are on track to reach the highest levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015.
- While teachers' expectations are generally much higher than previously, in some cases teachers do not always systematically check and explore pupils' understanding and ask questions which fully challenge pupils of different abilities. On these occasions, a few pupils make slightly slower progress.
- The very few disadvantaged pupils, like their peers in all age groups, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach levels of attainment that are higher than those achieved by all pupils nationally.
- Effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that they make the same good progress as their classmates. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully plan work so that these pupils achieve well.
- Pupils achieve high standards in physical education and sport. They are frequently successful in a wide range of sports competitions. The effective use of sport funding contributes very well to the school's continued success.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- High quality care and teaching mean that children achieve exceptionally well during Reception. Attainment at the end of Reception is well above average and rising.
- Strong teamwork ensures that all adults have a detailed understanding of children's individual needs. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to children's learning and well-being. Every opportunity is used to develop children's personal skills, as well as fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, children make excellent progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Children are very happy and confident because adults listen to their views and respond promptly to their needs. They are confident about asking adults questions if they are unsure. For example, during a physical education lesson, children asked the teacher what 'opposite' meant so that they were able to follow instructions successfully. Children behave extremely well because expectations are clear and routines are very well established.
- The teaching of reading is a particular strength. Teachers and teaching assistants teach phonics confidently and very effectively. As a result, children's attainment in reading at the end of Reception is much higher than is typical for their age. Children's 'learning journals' illustrate the excellent progress the children make in the development of basic writing skills.
- Leaders have established very effective links with parents. For example, they provide regular information about how well children are learning. Children are well supported at home. For example, parents make regular written comments about their children's experiences and progress outside school in their individual books.
- The early years leader is an experienced and extremely knowledgeable member of the senior leadership team. She regularly completes secure assessments of children's learning with her team. The local authority confirms that assessments are an accurate evaluation of their starting points and progress.
- Leaders ensure safeguarding is given a high priority. As a result, children are secure and feel safe.

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	118293
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	448807

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Stirk
Headteacher	David Sherhod
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 November 2009
Telephone number	01732 882405
Fax number	01732 781027
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