

King's Ford Infant School and Nursery

Gloucester Avenue, Shrub End, Colchester, Essex CO2 9AZ

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and managers check teaching effectively and make sure it is almost always at least good. Most pupils consequently, typically make good progress across the school.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with national averages.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers generally use questioning effectively to check on pupils' progress and to reshape their learning in lessons so that most groups of pupils achieve well.
- The arrangements to support pupils' transition into the next stage of their education are well-organised and effective. Pupils are carefully prepared for their next school.
- The well-structured and stimulating provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children make good progress. They gain confidence and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Disadvantaged and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive very effective extra help and make good progress.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils cooperate well with one another and respect those who have different opinions to their own.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils typically conduct themselves well in lessons, and are friendly and polite towards others.
- Pupils are very well cared for and safe. They have great confidence in the adults in the school. Parents are very happy with the way the school teaches and looks after their children.
- The reorganised and effective governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. As a result teaching continues to improve and gaps in pupils' achievement are closing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' comments on pupils' marked work do not always help them to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers' targets do not always require them to bring about specific improvements in their pupils' performance.
- On a small number of occasions, adults do not provide sufficient challenge to extend the learning of individual pupils who have already achieved their targets, including the most able.
- Some middle leaders do not play a full part in helping the school to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, the majority of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy head of school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders, staff, groups of pupils and parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 24 responses from the staff questionnaire distributed for the inspection.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, the systems to track pupils' progress, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding arrangements and documentation, reports from external personnel and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Darren Aisthorpe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized infant school. Pupil numbers have increased since the previous inspection.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which is additional government funding used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- A significant number of pupils join the school at other than the usual times.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of one Nursery class with morning and afternoon sessions for 26 children and two full-time Reception classes.
- The school shares its site with the King's Ford Junior School.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils before school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and achievement by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - make clear to pupils in their marking and feedback what they need to do to improve their work and encourage pupils to act on the advice they are given
 - set activities that are at the right level of difficulty to interest and challenge all groups of pupils appropriately, including those who have already reached their targets, and the most able.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all middle leaders play an effective part in helping the school to raise pupils' achievement
 - teachers' individual targets refer explicitly to the amount of progress their pupils are expected to make.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy head have worked closely together to ensure teaching and behaviour are good. There is a very good sense of team work operating throughout the school, with all teachers being keen to ensure that every pupil is very well-cared-for and achieves the best they can. Many pupils join the school part way through the course of the academic year but leaders manage their entry effectively and ensure that staff assess the learning needs of new pupils and help them settle quickly into the school's routines.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders provide good training opportunities, act as good models in their own practice and set staff regular targets for improving their practice. However, these targets, whilst generally helpful, do not indicate as clearly as they should the improvements in pupils' progress that teachers are expected to bring about.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and know what needs to improve. The plan for improvement reflects the school's current priorities. Governors support leaders well and play an active part in the monitoring of the school's success in achieving its desired improvements.
- The leadership by middle leaders is uneven. In literacy and numeracy, leadership is good. Leaders of these subjects provide teachers with good advice about how to respond to the recent developments in the National Curriculum. They ensure teaching and achievement are both good in these subjects. However, the effectiveness of other middle leaders is too variable. Not all play an effective part in helping the school bring about improvements in pupils' achievement.
- The school provides a variety of interesting learning themes which hold pupils' attention well. The school ensures pupils understand the natural links between different subjects. For example their design of an 'Our World Map' showed pupils how Colchester relates to the world by including relevant 'questions' and photographs from pupils in other countries.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. In a Year 1 lesson pupils were encouraged to think about how a camel which had been left out in the sun with no water might feel. They readily challenged the camel's master saying he was 'selfish' and 'should treat all animals like humans'. The maturity of the pupils' responses during this 'role-play' activity was impressive. This demonstrated the effective way that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum is taught and how it develops pupils' understanding of themselves and others. The school ensures pupils value those from other cultures and quickly challenges even the slightest hint of discrimination in what pupils, or adults, say and do.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They elect a school council whose members talk with all pupils before making decisions and taking action, and this helps them understand key concepts such as 'democracy' and 'fairness'. The school council regularly nominates pupils who are 'always good' for assembly awards because pupils told them that the school's system for rewarding those pupils was not as fair as it could be. Pupils have developed a good understanding of key social values such as tolerance and understanding and recognise the contribution these values make to our way of life.
- The school is committed to securing equal opportunities for all pupils. Previously boys had not achieved as well as girls and leaders have addressed this by providing additional resources to support boys. As a consequence boys' achievements have improved particularly in writing.
- Leaders have made good use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. The school has employed additional teachers to support eligible pupils, and put in place workshops for parents to explain the support they are receiving. It has also provided opportunities for parents of eligible pupils to give on-line feedback on their child's progress. As a result the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing.
- The additional funding for sport has been used effectively to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff and

to provide specialist teachers. For example the school now has a dance club, 'rugby pups' and yoga club, which many pupils enjoy.

- All children have had the opportunity to take part in 'Stomp' and ice-skating as part of the school's enrichment of the physical education curriculum. In addition the school uses '5-a-day', an online resource to promote five minute exercises each morning, and pupils in Year 2 have the opportunity to have swimming lessons.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding children are effective. They meet statutory requirements and are understood by all staff and pupils. A copy of the school's child protection policy is included in the induction pack for new staff.
- Senior leaders and governors are working closely with the neighbouring junior school to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next step in their education. For example, staff have worked closely together to ensure that both schools know how well pupils are doing in writing.
- The local authority supports the school well. Since the previous inspection it has put in place an improvement board containing members of the governing bodies of both the infant and junior schools. Governors say they found this helpful in focusing them clearly on the school's priorities. The school makes good use of an experienced school improvement consultant to provide an external, critical view of its performance. This has provided good support and helped school leaders to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Staff and leaders effectively liaise with other schools or nurseries to ensure that transition into the infant school is as effective as it can be. This is particularly the case for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The school quickly provides appropriate support and specialist provision for any pupils who need it and ensures the most vulnerable pupils are effectively cared for.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now effective. Following a recent review, the governing body has been restructured and the school has appointed new members. They have invested in external support and expertise to address specific aspects for the school's work as necessary.
 - The governing body has worked with the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure that information they receive is more easily understood. For example, changes have been made to the way the headteacher reports to governors on pupils' achievement and standards and how these compare with other schools. As a result governors are challenging leaders more in their quest to be an 'outstanding school'.
 - Governors make good use of external advice to support them in the performance management of the headteacher. They are informed about the performance of teachers and understand the link between performance targets, pupils' progress and teachers' pay. They know what is being done to improve teaching and generally ensure that teachers' pay is linked directly to their impact on pupils' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are eager to come to school and apply themselves enthusiastically to the many interesting activities and learning opportunities staff provide.
- Pupils conduct themselves well when in lessons, play happily together in the playground and are friendly towards others. In lessons, pupils listen to teachers and adults and generally respond to instructions quickly.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities. For example, some time the performance of classmates in sports activities whilst others participate in school council discussions and decisions. They carry out these duties keenly and with pride.

- In recent years there have been no serious incidents of bullying or racism and no exclusions. Staff keep comprehensive records of minor misdemeanours and pupils say any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils respect those who have different opinions to their own and develop a good understanding of different cultures and traditions.
- Pupils are very well cared for. They have great confidence in the adults in the school. Parents are very happy with the way the school teaches and looks after their children. 'No child looks miserable when they leave the school at the end of the day' was how one parent summed up the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for at school and parents agree. That is because staff throughout the school provide excellent care so pupils thrive. Individual parents took time to speak with or contact inspectors to give glowing reports on their children's progress and the school's caring atmosphere.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, including name-calling. They know who to go to if they are worried or upset about something.
- School leaders ensure that any absence is followed up promptly by the well-being mentor and as a result attendance is improving and is close to the national average. Similarly, the incidence of pupils coming late to school has been reduced partly due to the new electronic signing-in system in the school's entrance and the introduction of the popular breakfast club.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet or swimming.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now typically good throughout the school. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good teaching and support help disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make progress similar to their peers. In lessons, learning support assistants explain and encourage ensuring pupils understand what to do.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to regularly check on pupils' progress and reshape learning in lessons to ensure pupils achieve well. However, not all staff ensure the tasks they set fully stretch the most-able pupils or move pupils who have already achieved their targets forward in their learning.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and give verbal feedback but not all marking is as informative as it needs to be. Pupils do not always know what their next steps are or how to improve their work.
- The teaching of phonics has been improved since the last inspection and this has led to an increase in pupils achieving the expected standard in Year 1. It is evident from pupils' books that phonic skills are being used well by pupils when they write.
- The teaching of writing, which was a weak area in the previous inspection, has also improved. As a result pupils now make good progress overall and the gap between pupils' achievement in reading and writing has narrowed. This is because teachers have provided more writing opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their writing skills. For example, pupils are selected to take home and write about the class 'mascot'.
- Teachers work with the local schools and many other external personnel to ensure that they constantly improve their practice. As a consequence, pupils make good progress in mathematics. Although not

enough are achieving the higher levels, evidence in books and in the school's own assessments show that the rate of pupils' progress is accelerating.

- Teachers provide interesting topics and themes that generally capture and maintain pupils' attention in lessons and ensure they are eager to learn. This is because teachers ensure that learning is stimulating and fun. For example, pupils were keen to explore and draw the gutted fish that the teacher had brought in to class as part of the 'seaside' theme.
- Classrooms are well-organised, exciting areas of learning. They are full of bright, colourful displays of pupils' work as well as supportive prompts which pupils use to help them. Leaders have ensured that there is consistency in the way work is presented between each classroom so that pupils at all ages can see what they might achieve if they really try. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well; there are few examples of pupils being identified for the 'red spot'.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The quality of work seen by inspectors in pupils' books and the school's own records of their achievement indicate that, by the time they leave Year 2, pupils have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. These pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with the national average. The progress of pupils in other year groups is also improving.
- Pupils make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. In 2015 a large majority of children reached a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In the 2014 phonics check, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected standard was well below average. This year pupils have made good progress in phonics and have achieved better results than in 2014. Although results are still below average, a high proportion of pupils have made good progress from the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Progress from their varying starting points compares favourably with that of their classmates. This is because they are given targeted support in the classroom, which pupils say helps them with their work.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is as good as that of other groups across the school. A significant proportion of these pupils joined the school later than the usual starting point, many also having additional needs. However, pupils settle quickly because the school provides well for their needs and those of their families.
- The most-able pupils could achieve more than they currently do. In 2014 and 2015, fewer pupils in Year 2 attained the higher levels than average in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of the most-able pupils is sometimes slowed because the work that teachers give them is not always challenging enough.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the school with standards that are broadly typical for their age but they often exhibit significant weaknesses in their personal development, understanding of number and communication. They make good progress because school leaders are passionate about ensuring children get a very good start to their education and are effective in making sure that the children achieve well.
- The department is well led and managed. Transition arrangements between home, school and other provisions into the Nursery and Reception classes are very effective. The arrangements to ensure children are safe are also very effective. Children settle quickly into the school's routines and behave well. They quickly become self-confident learners, especially when working in the expansive outside areas, and are supported very effectively by all adults. As a result, children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage well prepared for Year 1.

- Adults regularly check and record the steps in each child's development, both when conducting adult-led learning activities and when children choose their own activities. The new system for tracking children's progress is proving to be highly effective in identifying gaps in learning. Staff therefore know the children's individual needs and plan effectively for them. Leaders encourage face-to-face and on-line contributions from parents to ensure they can support their children's learning and know how they are doing.

- Teaching is good. As a result the proportion of children making a good level of development has increased and, in 2015, it is likely to be above average when national results are published. This is a marked improvement on 2014. Teachers prepare well-structured activities that consistently available to meet the needs of all children. As a result children feel able to move freely between areas and are very keen to explain what they are doing and what they want to explore. Inspectors were offered 'chocolate cakes' that children had made in the 'mud' kitchen.

- Staff have been trained in how to teach phonics and do so effectively. Adults quickly correct mistakes so that children develop their phonic skills and build their accuracy and confidence in speaking, particularly in the Nursery.

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	114717
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	462119

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Canning
Headteacher	Pam Rose
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2013
Telephone number	01206 574524
Fax number	01206 560702
Email address	admin@kingsford-inf.essex.sch.uk

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