

Katherine Semar Junior School

Ross Close, Saffron Walden, CB11 4DU

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Attainment continues to be high, year on year, in English and particularly in mathematics.
- The most able pupils reach the highest levels of which they are capable and achieve extremely well.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics, but also in other subjects such as French and physical education (PE).
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs all make the same excellent progress as their classmates.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding, and it is rarely less than good. Teachers show that they have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve.
- High-quality marking in exercise books gives pupils a route to excellence. Pupils respond well to the helpful targets set as a matter of course.
- Small-group tuition by teaching assistants is excellent. Occasionally their support is less effective during whole-class teaching.
- Any slowing in progress is identified promptly and pupils are given top-quality support to help them catch up quickly.
- Pupils are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education because the school nurtures their talents highly effectively.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are motivated, engaged and excited by their teachers. They thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe.
- All staff are proud of the school and morale is high. This is because they have full confidence in the leadership of the headteacher.
- All parents who responded to the online survey would recommend the school to others.
- The governors have worked hard to improve their own performance and as a result are able to challenge and support the school effectively. However, they are aware that they could engage more fully with pupils, parents and all staff in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons or part-lessons. The headteacher accompanied the inspection team on five lesson observations.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. A phone call was made to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses to the online survey (Parent View). They also took into account the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including: the school's own records of pupils' progress and attainment; documents on teaching and the school's performance; the schools' own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and its development plan; records relating to staff performance; and those relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

Glynis Bradley-Peat, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Concetta Caruana

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly average in size for a junior school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with the remainder coming from a variety of different heritages.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for certain groups, in this case for those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the work of teaching assistants by ensuring that:
 - all of them are actively involved in supporting pupils throughout all parts of the lesson
 - they allow sufficient waiting time for pupils to reflect on and respond to questions.
- Ensure that all members of the governing body become better known to all members of staff, pupils and parents through participating more fully in the range of events organised by the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils enter Year 3 with above-average levels of attainment and reach high levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school. Standards in other subjects are also high, particularly in French and PE. No groups of pupils underachieve.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics is well above average. This is because teachers plan lessons which challenge pupils to think for themselves and solve problems through working together in groups. The most able pupils make excellent progress and achieve the highest levels of attainment, particularly in mathematics where a significant number achieved Level 6 this year.
- In two writing lessons in Year 4, pupils worked collaboratively to develop their initial ideas about what the streets of India would be like. They worked busily together, discussing what they would see, hear and smell. Attitudes to learning were excellent and hence the quality of their written sentences was high.
- The progress pupils make in most of their subjects is outstanding because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are consistently high. The work in pupils' exercise books shows many examples of exceptional progress, and the school's own information shows consistently rapid rates of progress between subjects and across year groups. Many of the lesson observations carried out by inspectors recorded examples of remarkable progress.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium achieve very well. Their progress is outstanding because of the teaching they receive on a daily basis but also because bespoke support is provided when required. For example, small-group teaching in English and mathematics ensures there is little difference in performance measures between this group of pupils and their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid gains in their learning because of the carefully honed support provided by teachers in the classroom and through small group teaching by teaching assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also supported to make excellent progress, especially in the acquisition of spoken English language skills.
- The vast majority of pupils participate eagerly in their PE lessons and in a plethora of sporting opportunities presented by the school. This has an excellent impact on their physical well-being and the development of a healthy lifestyle. The school has suitable plans to develop sport further when it receives the new primary school sport funding.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A key strength of much of the teaching is the way teachers use assessment data to ensure that all pupils are challenged to achieve the levels of which they are capable. Teachers ask individualised questions to move pupils' learning on quickly. For example, the most able mathematicians in a Year 3 group made leaps in their learning when the teacher asked specific questions about how they might formulate a systematic method to check their answers.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge ensures that they are able to model answers and responses which pupils are then able to emulate effectively. In an outstanding French lesson

pupils learnt a great deal in a short space of time and thoroughly enjoyed doing so. They were able to speak in full sentences and acquired large amounts of new vocabulary quickly. Working with partners, pupils made their own matching games to practise the names of the foods they had learnt.

- Teachers bring history to life to enhance and accelerate learning. In a theme day, pupils played the part of air raid wardens, pick-pockets and German spies. This active involvement, alongside parents, provided them with a highly memorable experience. Original artefacts contributed well to the role-play activities. Pupils were able to weigh groceries, measure shoes at the 'Cobbler's shop' and buy stamps at the post office.
- Well-planned lessons ensure that pupils learn new skills quickly. In an outstanding PE lesson pupils improved their hand/eye coordination and reaction rates particularly well while playing a 'time bomb' game. Pupils were extremely keen to participate to the best of their ability and clearly enjoyed themselves in the process.
- Teaching assistants support pupils extremely well in improving their English and mathematics skills outside the classroom. When supporting pupils in class, a few do not always give pupils sufficient opportunity to answer questions independently as they intervene too readily. On other occasions, they do not always involve themselves actively with pupils' learning during whole-class teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils relish coming to school. They are full of praise for their teachers and say that they feel safe and secure. All parents who responded to the parent survey and all staff agree.
- Pupils clearly understand how to stay safe when using new technologies and are well informed about the different types of bullying. There is little evidence of bullying but pupils state quite clearly the course of action they would follow if it did occur.
- Attendance is above average and continues to improve. This is because the school works diligently with parents to ensure that the link between achievement and attendance is clear.
- In lessons, pupils behave very well because teaching is highly engaging and enjoyable. Their mature outlook on life promotes a view that learning time should not be wasted. As a result there is rarely any interruption to lessons.
- Pupils respect each other, their teachers and visitors to the school. They make a remarkable contribution to their own learning and contribute exceptionally well to the life of the school and wider community.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills for the future. They take on a wide variety of responsibilities, for example as librarians and house captains. During an assembly pupils were presented with certificates for good work by members of the school council.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- A determined drive for improvement has ensured that the school has moved forward considerably since the previous inspection. The quality of boys' writing has improved markedly and teachers' marking is of excellent quality.

- Staff share the same sense of purpose as senior leaders and this, combined with the excellent leadership from the headteacher, has improved the quality of teaching in particular. Leaders have not shied away from tackling relatively weak practice. High-quality feedback following lesson observations has ensured that teachers know exactly what they need to do to improve their skills. As a result, the achievement of the pupils has improved substantially.
- Leaders hold teachers rigorously to account for their performance, and set them challenging targets that relate tightly to school priorities, pupils' rates of progress and hence pay rises and promotion. Training for teachers is closely linked to their targets.
- Senior leaders ensure that subject leaders develop their skills well. They know the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and have detailed action plans to remedy the weaknesses. They check the quality of teaching in their areas and link this with pupils' progress.
- The curriculum provides pupils with memorable experiences and a wide variety of opportunities to excel in both sport and music in particular. Residential visits enable pupils to develop the skills to work together as a team and 'Radio KSJ' launched its first podcast recently.
- Equal opportunities are promoted exceptionally well. There are no underachieving groups of pupils, and those supported by the pupil premium and the most able pupils achieve extremely well.
- The local authority provides appropriately 'light touch' support for this outstanding school. Successful work has been done to support leaders with self-evaluation and to advise subject leaders on how to check the performance of subjects beyond English and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors rigorously hold the school to account for its work. They provide challenge and support in equal measure. Governors have a clear understanding of how well pupils achieve through the performance data available to them and the quality of teaching. Safeguarding currently meets national requirements.
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact this has on eligible pupils' achievement.
 - Governors are clear that pay increases are linked firmly with the performance of teachers. The performance of the headteacher is closely checked and links are made to pupils' achievement.
 - Although governance is a strong element of the school's leadership in most respects, some governing body members do not always engage well enough with staff, pupils and parents.

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	114950
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	428912

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Sweeting
Headteacher	Rachel Callaghan
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
Telephone number	01799 521120
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Email address	admin@katherinesemar-jun.essex.sch.uk

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