

Flitwick Lower School

Temple Way, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1LU

Inspection dates 15–16 January 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.

- Standards in English and mathematics are above average. Pupils are doing well in all key stages including the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Standards have risen since the previous inspection and continue to rise. The strong leadership and management of the headteacher and governors are the main reasons for the improvements in teaching and pupils' learning.
- The senior leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The staff team are all committed to improving the school further.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers know how well each pupil is doing and they make clear to pupils what is expected of them.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils read fluently with enjoyment and leave with above average standards.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do better. Their attendance in the last three years has been above average. Behaviour is usually good. Pupils feel safe, they are polite, and often help each other during play and with their work.
- The improvement since the previous inspection means that the school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although good, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently outstanding and pupils do not have enough chance to work by themselves.
- Some teachers are newly in charge of subjects and these staff are not yet playing a full part in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Three inspectors were present for the first day of the inspection and two for the second.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons led by every teacher. Three observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons to observe behaviour as well as sessions where letters and the sounds they make were being taught.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do. They also looked at their work in books. Meetings were held with groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils during breaks and lunch times, and during lessons.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, with senior leaders, with staff and with a local headteacher who, as a Local Leader in Education, has provided additional support to the school. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external information about pupils' progress, school development plans and behaviour and attendance records. They investigated safeguarding procedures and records.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the views of several parents who directly spoke to inspectors.
- Inspectors analysed the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector
Joseph Peacock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Pupils transfer to a local middle school at the end of Year 4 so there are no government floor standards.
- The large majority of pupils is White British and comes from the surrounding area.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action are average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There is no alternative off-site provision for any pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work by themselves
 - developing the role of teachers in charge of subjects so that they all play a full part in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Since the last inspection, standards have risen year-on-year because many pupils are making good progress, especially in reading. By the time they leave in Year 4, the large majority of pupils reach standards above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The improving rates of progress and rising achievement are because most teachers are making sure lessons are interesting and move pupils on more quickly in their learning, although a few inconsistencies remain.
- Children join the Reception class with skill levels similar to those expected for their age, although there is variation within this as an increasing proportion start school with language skills that are below typical expectations. They achieve well overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in reading and writing.
- Early reading skills, including letters and the sounds they make, are developed exceptionally well. Pupils have regular, well-planned opportunities to read in groups, to adults and silently to themselves. Most pupils achieved higher than the national average in the Year 1 screening check this year.
- Pupils in Year 2 discussed their books enthusiastically, describing what had happened and predicting what may happen next. They read confidently, expressively and with obvious enjoyment.
- The use of themes to make subjects more interesting is increasingly successful. For example, their study of famous people encouraged pupils to be thoughtful and sensitive in both their thinking and their writing. The writing skills of pupils of all abilities are improving strongly. Pupils produce a wide range of different types of writing, such as letters, diary entries and stories.
- Lesson observations and pupils' work books show that pupils across the school are making good and sometimes very good progress in lessons. This is because teaching has improved in every class and senior staff now make sure that no pupil falls behind with their work.
- All groups within school achieve well. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because they are supported effectively in the classroom and have individual plans to help them with their learning.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, do just as well as other pupils. The extra money for the few pupils supported by this funding is spent wisely and its impact is carefully checked. It provides benefit by improving these pupils' experiences of school, and in particular, the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently there is no gap in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils.
- A wide variety of first-hand experiences, interesting visits and visitors help to develop pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection so that the vast majority is good, with a small amount that is outstanding. This is because of the effective training provided for staff. Also, teachers' work has been checked more robustly to hold them to account for pupils' progress.
- Teachers are keen to continue to improve their teaching skills because they want all teaching to be as good as the best, so that pupils make outstanding rather than good progress in lessons. They use the information they have about pupils' current levels of ability to provide interesting activities that pupils can do and then move quickly on.
- There have been marked improvements in the teaching of writing. Work is always marked regularly and accurately with comments that help pupils to know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work further.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, careful checking of children's progress enables staff to offer a good range of activities for children to learn quickly. They develop the confidence to explore and find things out for themselves. Effective teaching of the sounds that letters make develops early reading and writing at a fast pace.
- In the best lessons, teachers help pupils to work together or on their own and they rise to the challenge. For example, in a Key Stage 1 literacy lesson, pupils were either working in groups or individually to produce information books on London. They sorted out the information from text, pictures and their own first-hand knowledge. This allowed pupils to take a lead in their own learning working by themselves.
- However, where teaching requires improvement, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve without direct support are not high enough. Learning activities set for pupils to work on their own are infrequent and sometimes not sufficiently interesting or hard enough. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much as they could.
- Support staff have been well trained so that they are able to lead the learning of small groups in reading and writing very effectively. This means that all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have learning difficulties, achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and in all year groups they behave well. Around school pupils are polite and friendly. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents reported in the past year.
- Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff and are keen to learn. Classrooms are pleasant places to work because pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner and are willing to help one another.
- Pupils say that bullying is not a concern for them but say that when it occurs occasionally, staff deal with this well. They are taught about the different forms of bullying and the sorts of risks they could encounter and are very aware of what is unacceptable behaviour. In conversations it is clear that pupils know how to respond and resolve any worries or concerns they may have. They know that staff are always on hand to help. Pupils know that their views matter and so feel valued.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They feel safe in school, not

just because of the way that adults take care of them, but also because they take care of one another.

- Pupils are proud of taking responsibility. They take their role on the 'Eco Team' seriously and know about the importance of saving energy and recycling. Older pupils make sure that no one is left out at break and lunch times.
- Pupils think quietly in assembly during prayer time and learn about important social values, such as caring for one another and thinking about others who might not have the same opportunities as themselves.
- Pupils who are known to be potentially vulnerable are supported well by staff both in their personal development and in their learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear view of how successful the school can be. Her resolute ambition and commitment to make the school even better for pupils is shared by the governing body, the leadership and management team and the whole-school community. She has taken full advantage of effective external support to improve provision since her appointment.
- Teachers have received good training and support from the local authority. The partnership work with the headteacher from a local school and the sharing of the good practice in that school has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, teaching is improving all the time and this involvement has been a key factor in driving the school's improvement.
- Leaders carefully check the work of teachers by observing lessons and checking pupils' books. They keep a close eye on how pupils are doing in reading, writing and mathematics. Regular meetings are held to discuss pupils who are not making enough progress so that action can be taken to help them catch up.
- The checking of the quality of lessons is perceptive and accurate. This information is used to manage the performance of teachers by setting targets, providing relevant training and making the right decisions about pay awards. This means that teachers have a clear understanding of their role, which is clearly linked to the 'Teachers' Standards'.
- Teachers and support staff have recently been appointed to work together as part of subject teams. These staff are honing their expertise quickly, although their first-hand checking of the quality of teaching is not yet fully developed. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities, but have not had the training to check pupils' work and teachers' planning and to make sure that new ideas to raise achievement work.
- Training has helped staff to set work at the right level for pupils. Despite this improvement some inconsistencies in teaching remain. For example, some pupils do not have enough chance to work on their own.
- The way subjects are taught has been changed to focus on raising pupils' achievements in English and mathematics and to motivate pupils to learn through interesting topics that appeal to boys and girls. Attractive and exciting displays around the school show the good range of after-school activities that enrich pupils' experiences. This supports pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ Pupils are taught to reflect upon their learning. Their respect and understanding of other faiths and cultures is good. This also supports equality of opportunity for all pupils. The whole school is deeply committed to all pupils achieving well, developing their talents and discovering new interests. The range of lessons and activities provide good opportunities to achieve this. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well organised and has an accurate grasp of how well the school is doing. Governors know all about pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. They are well informed about the targets set for teachers to improve their teaching. They share the headteacher's ambition and vision for the school and ask searching questions about its work. For example, when checking how the pupil premium funding is used, they find out how this is helping to improve the progress of eligible pupils. Governors manage the school budget efficiently. They make sure that pay rises are linked to advances in pupils' performance. Successful partnership working with the local authority, the partnership school and good use of available specialist support, has helped governors to improve the school.

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	109452
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	405237

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathon Brant
Headteacher	Joanna New
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2011
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