

Cedars Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110399
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	378096
Inspection dates	04–05 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Curtis
Headteacher	Stephen Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed a total of 24 lessons and 17 teachers. Inspectors met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and groups of pupils including some from Year 6. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of information including samples of pupils' work, the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning and the tracking of pupils' progress. They analysed the responses from 63 parental questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the school has raised attainment for all groups of pupils, especially in mathematics and writing.
- The extent to which teachers are making better use of assessment data to ensure a close match of task to pupils' abilities and provide a brisk pace to learning.
- The impact of new curriculum arrangements on pupils' achievements and all-round development.
- How far senior and middle leaders can demonstrate the impact of their work on improving provision and raising attainment.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average sized primary school and draws most of its pupils from communities close to the town centre. In recent years the school roll has grown to include pupils from further afield. Most pupils are of White British background. Other groups include Other White background, Asian British Indian and Black British African. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There is specialist nursery provision for seven children with special educational needs who have profound learning difficulties. Elsewhere the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Four new teachers started at the school in September 2011, including three who are newly qualified.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has made significant improvement since the previous inspection and now provides a good quality of education. Pupils are proud of their school, and their commitment to learning is evident throughout the day. They feel safe and have an excellent appreciation of how to take care of each other. Their considerate behaviour continues to be outstanding.

Attainment has risen steadily during the past three years. It was broadly average in 2009 and is now significantly above the national average overall and in English and mathematics. This is a direct result of improved teaching. Teachers are making better use of assessment information and ensuring a closer match of task to pupils' abilities, which in turn increases the pace of learning. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are making good progress and achieving well. These improvements have been driven by an increasingly confident and successful leadership team that has sustained the excellence of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improved many aspects of its work elsewhere. Senior and middle leaders have built a secure oversight of their areas of responsibility so that staff regularly account for the performance of their pupils. Effective arrangements for the identification of, and support for, potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities mean these pupils play a full part in the life of the school.

Parents and carers express high levels of satisfaction, 'Cedars is a brilliant school and my children are thriving there!' In addition to their strong support, governors have improved their ability to check and challenge performance. Staff and governors have successfully involved families in a review of the curriculum which has improved further the breadth and quality of education provided. The school evaluates its performance accurately and has good capacity for sustained improvement.

The school tracks the performance of its pupils in detail. By Year 6 boys and girls are performing comfortably better than their peers nationally in English and mathematics. Closer analysis shows that the boys are making faster progress in mathematics than the girls, whilst the reverse is true in writing. Senior leaders are alert to this fact. New curriculum arrangements have been made, but there remains scope to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their well-developed literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The majority of teaching ensures pupils make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and effective team work with teaching assistants

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frequently has a significant impact on pupils' learning. All teachers explain to pupils what they are expected to learn in lessons, but the smaller steps which pupils will need to take to achieve this are not always set out clearly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring teachers always make clear to pupils the small steps they have to take in order to meet the objectives of the lesson.
- Reduce the differences in progress made by girls and boys in writing and mathematics by increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their well-developed skills in other subjects of the National Curriculum.

These features should be in place by May 2012.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Conversations with pupils show them to be happy and enthusiastic about school. They work diligently in lessons and are keen to do well. Many are able to talk maturely about their preferred areas of study and are enthusiastic about recent changes to the school's curriculum. Displays and the analysis of the pupils' archive and current work reveal a good volume of activity across a range of subjects. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities and those with special educational needs and/or difficulties make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were enthused by the 'visit' of a character from a story by Roald Dahl. Their subsequent discussion was perceptive and showed a relish for language that enabled them to make a brisk start to their writing. This approach was particularly helpful for many of the boys who clearly enjoy imaginative writing. Attainment in mathematics has risen considerably since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy success in lessons, but opportunities for them to apply their skills to solve everyday problems are not yet a consistent feature across the school.

Behaviour is of a consistently high standard and pupils offer a friendly and courteous welcome to visitors. Older pupils are involved daily in the care of younger ones, supporting them during lunchtime and leading activities on the playground. By Year 6 they talk with great maturity about how to deal with potential conflict and are confident that, despite the occasional argument, there is no bullying at school.

Pupils are proud of their school and foster good links with the local community through concerts and performances and participation in a number of local events. Charitable activities include raising money for a school in Uganda. Pupils say they feel extremely safe, secure and valued. They develop a keen knowledge of how to assess risk and look after each other. They think deeply about their experiences and act in a principled manner. They engage enthusiastically in artistic and cultural opportunities, especially music. Observations of potentially vulnerable pupils show they are well cared for and helped to develop independence and to play a full part in

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the life of the school. Pupils have a good appreciation of what it means to live a healthy life and talk knowledgeably about the importance of diet and exercise. Attendance is above average.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan thoroughly to address pupils’ wide-ranging needs and engage them in learning. Their classroom management skills and subject knowledge are secure and as a result relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive. Lessons are often enlivened by practical activities and a good variety of resources that enhance pupils’ understanding. The frequent use of ‘talk partners’ supports the development of pupils’ speaking and listening and deepens their understanding. Teaching assistants are trained well and are effectively deployed to support groups and individuals, frequently making significant contribution to helping the few pupils with special educational needs to catch up and improve their work.

At the start of lessons teachers explain carefully what it is that pupils are expected to learn. Many are beginning to set out the smaller steps which will enable pupils to experience success, but these are not always sharply matched to individual needs. Teachers are adept at providing encouraging feedback during lessons and mark work carefully. Their comments tell pupils how well they are doing and increasingly point out what they need to do next to improve their work.

The school’s new creative curriculum has a positive impact on learning. These arrangements have added rigour by ensuring the systematic development of the knowledge and skills of individual subjects is not neglected. For instance, the specialist teaching of French and music ensures that pupils achieve well in these subjects. Pupils relish the chance to make links between different areas of their learning and the impact of this is evident in current work on rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef where recent geographical knowledge is leading to related scientific investigation. This style of work is at an early stage of development, as are the opportunities for pupils to work more independently. By Years 5 and 6, pupils have well-developed writing and mathematical skills and their application and commitment in lessons are strong.

Good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Well-established welfare arrangements ensure that pupils feel secure. The effective work of the inclusion manager ensures personalised programmes meet the needs of the potentially most vulnerable pupils. This includes strong links with parents, carers and partnerships with a wide range of agencies such as health and social services. This has had a positive impact on the attendance and achievement of these pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team has successfully addressed the recommendations the previous report. Approaches to monitoring the work of the school are rigorous and clearly linked to the assessment of pupils' progress and attainment. As a result, morale is high and staff at all levels are strongly committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils. Well-considered arrangements for the induction of new staff have enabled them to make a good start at the school.

Subject leaders demonstrate a strong sense of accountability for what is happening in their particular areas of responsibility. In English and mathematics, there is good oversight of the quality of teaching, drawn from lesson observations and the analysis of pupils' work in books. The assessment tracking system enables senior leaders to identify with precision the achievements of each pupil. As a result, ambitious targets for individuals and groups systematically inform the review of pupils' progress and the performance management of staff. The effective inclusion of pupils from an increasingly diverse variety of heritages, including potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, also reflects the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

The school adopts robust approaches to all aspects of risk assessment and the safeguarding of pupils. The headteacher and staff work very productively with other agencies, such as health professionals and social services, to tackle the specific needs of individual pupils and their families. The school is a welcoming and cohesive community. Pupils get on well together and effective plans promote engagement with other schools locally and beyond. This includes the development of wider international links, for instance with a school in Uganda. Pupils speak knowledgeably and sensitively about their own community and show good appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the United Kingdom.

The increasing popularity of the school is a direct result of the outstanding partnership that is forged with parents and carers throughout the school. Several parents told inspectors how the recent review of the curriculum had helped them understand what their children are expected to learn and how responsive the school was to their ideas and views on homework.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and are regularly involved in the life of the school. They work well with staff in determining school priorities and have improved the quality of their planning by ensuring that timescales and measurable outcomes are included.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The outstanding provision identified in the previous report has been sustained and developed further. Children settle swiftly into the world of school because of the excellent partnership with parents and carers. An exemplary induction programme enables adults to develop an excellent knowledge of every individual starting in the nursery and forge close links with families. As a result, children arrive happily each morning and show great confidence in daily routines.

Last year’s data for nursery children show that they made good progress from their starting points, which were broadly average for their age. At the end of Reception all pupils were working within, and beyond, age-related expectations in each of the areas. Progress was consistently good across all areas of learning and outstanding for some in aspects of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Current Nursery and Reception children are doing well, but from slightly lower starting points. Teachers have been swift to ensure effective support for those children, often boys, who arrive with lower levels of communication, language and literacy so that they too make good progress.

Staff planning is thorough and detailed. It ensures an excellent blend of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children select equipment and resources and use them thoughtfully when directing their own work. They show increasing ability to work for an extended period, to follow through their ideas and collaborate well with each other in both indoor and outdoor classrooms. Adults’ acute observation of the children means the adults are skilled in spotting when to intervene to extend language or reinforce understanding. Those children with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully integrated within the Nursery class. They receive carefully tailored support that enables them to make good progress towards their targets. There is outstanding attention to ensuring children’s safety and

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welfare and the positive role models of the adults lead to exceptionally good behaviour.

The Early Years Foundation Stage team benefits from highly experienced and effective practitioners and inspirational leadership. The entire team works well together and shows a persistent and infectious inquisitiveness about the children’s learning and development that is shared widely beyond the school. This close teamwork ensures assessment arrangements are thorough and knowledge is shared and used to inform the plans to accelerate still further the children’s learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Around 20% of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of them express high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. Inspection findings reflect these positive responses. A few parents raise concerns about the management of behaviour. Inspection evidence shows that behaviour is outstanding. The school successfully includes one or two pupils who occasionally demonstrate challenging behaviour which is very well managed. Pupils show great maturity in talking about this, and their own behaviour, and how to avoid conflict.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cedars Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 322 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	59	25	40	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	73	17	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	28	44	33	52	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	49	31	49	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	65	18	29	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	54	27	43	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	44	34	54	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	48	30	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	48	31	49	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	52	23	37	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	49	27	43	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	54	29	46	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	39	62	23	37	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cedars Primary School, Newport Pagnell MK16 0DT

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome during the inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all and to see you getting on so well together. We think that the way you respect each other and talk intelligently about the things that are important to you is outstanding. You told us you feel safe and we agree that the staff take excellent care of you. Just as important is the sensible way that you care for each other and, as Year 6 said to me, '...try to avoid conflict'.

You told us that Cedars is a good school and that is getting better and better. The inspectors agree. We know this because your teachers make learning fun and help you make good progress. Over the past three years your results in the national tests have kept improving so that now they are much better than the national average. Keep it up!

At the moment, the boys do a little bit better than the girls in mathematics, and the girls do a bit better at writing than the boys. We would like you to close that gap and, because you are good at literacy and numeracy, have asked teachers to give you even more opportunities to use these skills in other subjects.

Teachers are good at making you understand what you have got to learn during a lesson, but sometimes it isn't always clear how you are going to manage this. We have asked them to make sure you know the small steps you have to take so you can always succeed.

At the last inspection your school was satisfactory, now it is good. Perhaps next time, by continuing to work hard together you can make it outstanding!

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough
Lead inspector

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