

Church End Lower School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109470
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	377926
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Mary Hinds

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Neale
Headteacher	Brian Storey
Date of previous school inspection	04 December 2006
School address	Church Walk Marston Moretaine Bedford MK43 0NE
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mary Hinds

Additional Inspector

Mehar Brar

Additional Inspector

Fiona Arnison

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Parts of 19 lessons were observed and 12 teachers and one teaching assistant were seen. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to self-evaluation and monitoring, the analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' planning and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Inspectors also listened to pupils read. Questionnaires returned by 135 parents and carers were scrutinised together with those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

The school is slightly larger than similar schools nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school has gained several awards some of these being Arts Mark, Sports Mark, Healthy Schools status and the International Schools award.

The governing body manage a before- and after-school club and holiday care and is reported within this inspection. A pre-school and children's centre located on the school site are not managed by the governing body and are, therefore, subject to separate inspection and reporting arrangements.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. A particular strength is the excellent quality of the teaching of reading. As a result, pupils’ progress is rapid for almost all groups. It is not yet outstanding because teaching does not ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently outstanding progress in other subjects, particularly in mathematics in Years 3 and 4.
- All pupils achieve well given their starting points in all key stages. They consistently reach high standards in reading and above average standards in writing and mathematics by Year 4. Pupils also acquire excellent communication skills.
- The majority of teaching is good. Assessment information is used well in literacy to provide challenging work for pupils. However, work is not always fine-tuned to stretch pupils of different abilities, especially more-able pupils, in mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend their mathematical understanding in other subjects.
- Pupils’ behaviour in classes and around the school is outstanding. They are exceptionally courteous, cooperative and very willing to help each other. All pupils say they feel safe in school and all parents and carers support this view. Attendance is well-above average.
- Leaders have high expectations and are totally committed to ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can. Leaders have secured good, and often outstanding, progress in literacy through coaching and high quality training. However, such focused support is more limited in mathematics and the leadership of mathematics lacks rigour resulting in some inconsistent practice. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked to ensure all are achieving well, however, progress data is not shared explicitly with the governing body in order for them to hold senior leaders to account for their performance particularly in mathematics. The school’s promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and

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cultural development is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on pupils' good mathematical achievement in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that:
 - work is always well matched to the needs of all pupils, especially more-able pupils
 - in all lessons, teaching is adapted to pupils' different levels of understanding throughout the lesson to ensure progress is rapid
 - every opportunity is provided to encourage pupils to improve their mathematical skills through targeted feedback, both oral and written throughout the lesson and when pupils record their work
 - there are enough opportunities for pupils to solve problems that are set in real life situations across the curriculum.

- Consolidate the contribution of the leadership of mathematics so that outstanding teaching is typical across the school by:
 - providing tailored training for all staff, including the opportunity to observe outstanding teaching
 - ensuring that identified areas for development are always rigorously monitored so that the correct improvement strategies are consistently implemented
 - providing governors with clear information on the progress all groups of learners make in mathematics in order to hold teachers and leaders fully to account.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is above average. It is well above average in reading and above average in mathematics and writing. This represents at least good progress, and often outstanding progress in reading. The gap between boys' and girls' writing is being narrowed significantly. All pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals achieve better than all pupils nationally in all subjects by the end of Key Stage 1. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, as they have well tailored programmes to meet their needs. Support staff contribute well to their progress, because they provide appropriate support and challenge.

Progress in Years 3 and 4 is good and by the time pupils leave the school, attainment is above average with some pupils reaching high levels. Progress continues to be

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rapid in reading so that by Year 4 their attainment is high and is at least one year above the national average. Pupils make good progress in writing, so that by the end of Year 4 the attainment of all groups of pupils continues to rise and is now more securely above average. However, in mathematics, pupils' progress from the end of Key Stage 1 is only satisfactory. Some of the more able pupils do not achieve as high a standard as they are capable of. As a consequence, the above average attainment achieved in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is only sustained rather than increased.

Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' learning is good, a view expressed overwhelmingly by parents and carers. Reading has a very high profile and pupils read daily on an individual and group basis according to their ability. Pupils are highly motivated and show real enjoyment in their reading. In one well targeted reading session, the teachers' enthusiasm, subject knowledge and focused questioning ensured that pupils remained totally focused to find out what happened to the 'bear who was scared'. Learning was maximised as the pupils consolidated their phonic skills (linking letter and sounds). They delighted in identifying rhyming words and through this their comprehension and communication skills were developed exceptionally well. This activity also enabled pupils to be independent as they read silently to themselves. They cooperated and listened with sustained concentration as they took turns to read out aloud to each other.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the highly positive relationships ensure that pupils aspire to meet them. Classrooms are always purposeful and productive learning environments. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers plan practical activities that encourage pupils to work independently and collaboratively in pairs. For example, all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in a Year 2 class worked well together weighing and measuring a variety of materials and carefully recording their results. They consequently made good gains in their learning. Children in the Reception classes confidently choose from a range of stimulating activities to develop their skills. They are exceptionally keen to participate in everything. Parents and carers are rightly delighted with the good quality of the teaching, and their children's enjoyment of it.

Adults intervene at critical moments to either support or extend pupils' learning through effective questioning. Assessments in reading and writing are used well to pitch activities accurately to individual needs and abilities. In the best mathematics' lessons, teachers also match the tasks precisely to different abilities. They identify clear learning outcomes which they discuss with pupils, ensuring that they understand what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. For example in two mathematics lessons observed simultaneously, average ability pupils were partitioning two digit numbers. In another parallel class more able pupils were partitioning three digit numbers and by the end of the lesson some pupils were partitioning four digit numbers. In these lessons, teachers responded to individual pupils' rates of progress and depth of understanding by skilfully adjusting activities to

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provide further opportunities to practise and/or extend pupils' skills. Hence, pupils made good progress. However, this is not consistent practice across all year groups. For example older pupils often complete the same work. Moreover, there is sometimes a lack of clear feedback for pupils to know precisely what they have achieved and what they need to do next in order to improve further, especially in mathematics.

The curriculum is well planned and has cross curricular links which engage pupils well. Pupils have many opportunities to explore, investigate and reflect through a range of activities, both inside and outside the class. For example, pupils displayed genuine astonishment and awe in an assembly when they heard that Evelyn Glennie could 'hear' music through vibrations. Learning opportunities like this, as well as the planned curriculum have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and encourages them to be thoughtful, independent, cooperative and confident learners. Additionally it also provides opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, information and communication technology skills, as well as key skills in other subjects. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in different subjects. This, together with satisfactory rather than good progress in mathematics Years 3 and 4, precludes some pupils from reaching their potential attainment level.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in and out of lessons is exemplary. Pupils show very high levels of respect and courtesy and they have excellent attitudes to their learning. This makes a significant contribution to learning in lessons and pupils show very high levels of engagement, collaboration and cooperation in lessons. Attendance at school is well-above the national average and pupils are consistently punctual to lessons. The school has exceptionally successful behaviour management strategies in place to ensure it is managed very effectively. The school's records indicate that incidences of behaviour causing concern, including bullying of any type are extremely rare. This was verified by discussions with pupils, who had a good understanding of what bullying is, different types of bullying and what to do if they witness it or feel that they had been a victim. All parents and carers indicated in the questionnaire responses that they are highly positive about how the school keeps their child safe at school and about behaviour. Similarly almost all parents are satisfied that the school deals effectively with isolated incidences of bullying when they occur. The before- and after-school club provides an exceptionally safe and secure environment where pupils enjoy relaxing or playing together.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an ambitious and shared vision for the school that is fully supported by the governing body, and all members of staff. The school has developed a highly effective partnership with parents and provides a range of support for them, including web based activities for parents to work with their children during holidays and weekends. As one parent comments 'the level of

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communication and encouragement for parental involvement is superb'. Leaders have developed a highly cohesive team who are keen to develop their practice and improve the school further. The positive impact of this team approach is evident in the good teaching in literacy which is securing good and often outstanding outcomes. Similarly, this collegiate approach is evident in the thematic curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils and prepares them well for their next stage of education. Middle leaders work alongside more experienced leaders in order to monitor and improve all areas of the creative curriculum. This together with a wide variety of enrichment activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development exceptionally well, through community links, partnerships, visits and visitors, as well as celebrating different cultures and ethnic backgrounds through music, art, history and story telling.

Professional development has focused well on literacy and generic teaching strategies through coaching and modelling good practice, and enabling teachers to observe outstanding lessons. This approach has secured good improvements in literacy and shows that the school is well placed to continue to improve further. However, this is not as well embedded in relation to improving further the quality of teaching in mathematics. In addition, some improvement strategies identified through leaders' evaluations have not been systematically monitored in mathematics to ensure that they are implemented rigorously. Although the school collects a good range of data about pupils, this is not shared enough with governors so that they can hold leaders fully to account for pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. The governing body provides both challenge and support to the school. The chair of the governing body is passionate about the school's continuous improvement and all governors take great interest in the school's performance through lesson observations, leaders' subject reports and frequent informal and more formal meetings. They make certain that safeguarding arrangements are robust and that all training is up-to-date. The school ensures that pupils have equal opportunities in the activities they provide. All pupils achieve well and there is no evidence of discrimination.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church End Lower School, Bedford, MK43 0NE.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. You told us how much you like school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and finding out about what you learn in your lessons. We were extremely impressed with your behaviour. You are all very considerate, have exceptional manners and are very mature and sensible. As a result, you make a very strong contribution to the warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Church End Lower is a good school. This is because:

- your headteacher and all the teachers and adults are always trying to make your school even better
- your attitudes to learning are outstanding and you know that it is important to keep yourselves and everyone else safe
- your teachers know you very well and they make sure that you enjoy your work – they help you to make outstanding progress in reading and good progress in writing and for most of you good progress in mathematics

To help you make even better progress, we have asked the school to:

- check that the work you are given challenges you to do your very best in mathematics, especially for those of you who find mathematics easy
- make sure that you practise your mathematical skills in other subjects
- give you more information to help you see how well you are doing and to think about what you do well and how you can improve your work yourself
- make sure that school leaders are doing everything to improve teaching in mathematics so that you all achieve your very best.

We are sure you will want to help by keeping up your excellent behaviour, trying your very best in your work and maintaining your excellent attendance.

Well done to you all and the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Lead inspector

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