

Buckden CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137639
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	387194
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Linda Killman HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Jarvis
Headteacher	Alison Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
School address	School Lane Buckden St Neots PE19 5TT
Telephone number	01480 810241
Fax number	01480 811937
Email address	office@buckden.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	27–28 June 2012
Inspection number	387194



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Killman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Lakey

Additional Inspector

Andrew Wibroe

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by 11 different teachers as well as group sessions led by teaching assistants. In addition, they heard pupils read in three different year groups, and made 12 shorter visits to classes over the two days. The total time inspectors spent in classrooms observing learning amounted to nine and a half hours. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, data on pupils' achievement, work in their books, plans for improvement, monitoring records of teaching, and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors spoke informally to parents and carers as they arrived or collected their children from school; a small number spoke to the lead inspector directly by phone. They received, and took into account, 133 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is average in size. Almost all pupils are White British; others are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Percentages of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs are below average. A few pupils from families with personnel serving in the armed forces join or leave the school during the school year. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress. Privately run before- and after-school childcare was not inspected as it is independently managed and subject to separate inspection arrangements. The school has achieved several nationally accredited awards including Healthy Schools status, Investors in People and the Eco Schools award.

The school has been led by three different headteachers over the last five years. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2010. The school converted from maintained school status to an academy in November 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because teaching is not consistently good enough to raise average attainment to above average. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 have made steady progress. In Key Stage 2, some groups have made slow progress. Currently most pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are progressing satisfactorily and some are exceeding expected progress. Gaps are narrowing for those groups whose learning had previously fallen behind.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, leading to variation in pupils' achievement over time. Where it is good, teaching challenges and inspires pupils and promotes enthusiastic and productive learning. Satisfactory teaching ensures that most pupils make sufficient progress but tasks planned and set are not as demanding. Occasionally, inadequate teaching occurs when teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations and pupils lose interest. Teaching is satisfactory overall.
- Pupils mostly conduct themselves well in and around school. There have been no exclusions this year and bullying is rare. Attendance is above average and pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Behaviour and safety are satisfactory rather than good because, in a few lessons, pupils' concentration drifts, leading to restlessness and lost learning time.
- Frequent changes in leadership have resulted in inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' achievement. Actions to raise attainment in English are showing signs of success. Key leaders are monitoring teaching and learning but not always with sufficient rigour to self-evaluate accurately and to set challenging future targets. All leaders and managers have satisfactory capacity to make further

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

improvements. The headteacher and the governing body have begun to address the concerns of a few parents and carers about home–school communication but some weaknesses remain.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics so that most reach above average standards by:
 - tracking the progress of individuals and groups more regularly
 - taking swift action to intervene when progress slows
 - ensuring that additional adult support is consistently effective in promoting good learning.
- By July 2013, improve the quality of teaching so that none is inadequate and the large majority is good by ensuring that:
 - leaders and managers provide staff with regular developmental feedback and specific, measurable, short-term targets for improvement
 - staff have higher expectations for how much pupils are able to achieve in lessons
 - good practice is shared widely among staff.
- Improve communication with parents and carers by:
 - responding to concerns within specified time limits
 - explaining the educational reasons underpinning decisions taken to make changes to teaching, the curriculum and the school's accommodation
 - keeping the school's website up to date.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. Inspection findings confirm that, whereas in the previous two years too many individuals and groups did not progress at the same rate as others nationally, most pupils are currently making at least satisfactory progress.

Children in Reception have made satisfactory progress from starting points that this year are just above those typically expected for their age. They play and learn enthusiastically and confidently. Their personal skills develop particularly well because a broad range of interesting activities encourage them to cooperate, communicate and share. Opportunities for them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are plentiful. Even so, there is not always enough challenge in some of the activities to extend the most-able children's thinking and creativity. The current Reception classes are moving into Year 1 with attainment that is above

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

average and basic skills that prepare them well for the next stage of learning. Inspectors saw children enthusiastically writing short messages on laptop computers to develop their literacy and word-processing skills.

Steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been sustained historically through Key Stage 1. Pupils benefit from regular, systematic teaching of reading; they read confidently, with enthusiasm and expression. They enjoy books and have gained skills and understanding in the use of phonics (letters and sounds) to help them to tackle unfamiliar words. Their attainment is broadly average in literacy, numeracy and science. In a science lesson, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 used scientific language accurately as they discussed electrical appliances around the home and the potential dangers of electricity.

This year almost all pupils in Key Stage 2 have made at least satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science; Year 5 and 6 pupils have made considerably faster progress in reading than similar pupils nationally. Attainment is broadly average. The progress of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils whose families serve in the armed forces has started to accelerate because previous weaknesses in the quality of support have been improved. The gap between their achievement and other pupils is narrowing. However, the progress made in mathematics is not as marked as it is in English. Pupils enjoy using information and communication technology and have a good understanding of e-safety. Year 6 pupils researched aspects of the Olympic games using the internet, gathered relevant information and delivered good-quality individual presentations to others. By the end of Year 6, pupils are well-rounded, show maturity as learners and are completely ready for the move to secondary school.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is variable. Most parents and carers consider that teaching is good; inspection findings show that most is satisfactory or good but, occasionally, teaching is inadequate. Relationships are mutually respectful between staff and pupils and this gives pupils the confidence to ask for help when needed. Staff provide good role models for pupils to emulate. They are supportive, enthusiastic and respond quickly with praise for effort and achievement to boost pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Teachers ensure that opportunities are plentiful in the curriculum for pupils to work in pairs and groups, as well as individually, to develop their skills in working collaboratively. This was particularly apparent in a Year 6 mathematics lesson when pupils generously shared the methods they were devising to convert kilometres into miles.

Good teaching is typified by high expectations for behaviour and work ethic, varied use of resources and approaches that sustain pupils' interest, and on-the-spot assessment used to adjust teaching quickly so that no-one is left behind. Where teaching is weakest, expectations are not high enough. Teachers are too accepting of low productivity; time is not always used effectively so motivation wanes and

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

there is little sense of urgency to move learning on quickly when pupils show that they are capable of doing so. All teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately in English, mathematics and science but some do not use this information well enough to tailor activities precisely to pupils' varying abilities. Progress checks are not frequent enough to ensure timely revisions to targets once they are achieved and to adapt the provision if it is not having the desired impact. The quality of support provided by support staff is variable. The special needs coordinator ensures that support assistants are trained to deliver special programmes. These are effective in promoting pupils' literacy skills but less successful in accelerating their progress in numeracy.

Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and they generally provide helpful points for improvement in English but this is inconsistent in other subjects. Teaching pays close attention to the development of pupils' reading skills through the daily teaching of phonics or guided reading activities. Curriculum planning is proficient in setting learning in real-world contexts to capture pupils' interests and motivate them. For example, with the Olympic flame's imminent arrival near Buckden, pupils calculated the distances that Olympic teams will travel from their home country to London, converted kilometres into miles and recorded their findings against national flags.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They move around the school calmly and sensibly. They listen well, celebrate each other's achievements respectfully and reflect thoughtfully on current issues. At break times, pupils play energetically without incident or sit quietly chatting to friends while enjoying a healthy snack. In the dining hall, well-mannered pupils wait patiently and clear away without fuss. Pupils say that they feel safe and free from harassment or forms of prejudice-based bullying, although they concede that, occasionally, some unkind name-calling occurs about pupils' appearance. A few parents and carers feel that bullying is not always dealt with effectively but the pupils confirm the contrary. They told inspectors that if they are troubled they know where to seek help and are confident that their concerns will be resolved quickly.

There are many strengths in pupils' behaviour and understanding of safety but overall these are satisfactory. This is because, in some lessons, pupils do not always show commitment to their learning, especially when they are working independently. They are inclined to lose interest and waste time. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they should.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection, frequent changes in personnel at a senior level have led to the pace of improvement stalling periodically. Even so, all of the key issues raised in the last inspection have been tackled successfully, including pupils' understanding of social, cultural and religious diversity, their better understanding of how to improve and their attainment in science. The broad, balanced and enriched curriculum and

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

strong links with the local church promote pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development satisfactorily. Pupils now appreciate that, although diversity is less obvious locally, it is extensive in other parts of the country. The focus on literacy in the curriculum has improved attainment in reading significantly. Good use has been made of external moderation to ensure the accuracy of assessment which has not always been sufficiently precise in the past.

The headteacher, senior leaders, the governing body and subject leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and all contribute to strategic planning and self-evaluation. Staff are loyal supporters of the school and, as one staff member explained, 'I can see such a lot of hard work going on to improve the school.' The introduction of an effective system to track pupils' achievement has enabled leaders and managers to pinpoint progress as a priority but checks are not frequent enough. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making satisfactory or better progress because weaknesses in provision have been addressed appropriately. The school works effectively with professional partners to support families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Additional funding (the pupil premium) for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has been allocated to employ additional staff and this group's achievement has improved as a result. This is testimony to the school's promotion of equality and its positive approach in tackling discrimination. Nonetheless, a few significant weaknesses remain. The management of performance is insufficiently rigorous. Feedback to teaching staff does not provide clear enough explanation of what they need to do to improve. The most effective teachers are not sharing their practice widely enough to be influential in supporting others to develop their skills and to raise their expectations for how much pupils are able to achieve in lessons.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met and pupils are safe. It is acutely aware that there is more to do to secure the confidence of a few parents and carers. A committee dedicated to communication has been formed, parental surveys have been undertaken, and parents' and carers' views have been sought and taken into account in decision-making. The very large majority of parents and carers are satisfied with all that the school provides. There remain a few that are unconvinced that they are well-informed about changes to the teaching, the curriculum and the school's accommodation. They also feel that the school does not respond to their concerns quickly enough either in person or through the school's website. Improving communication is a priority. Not enough has been done to win the support of a small minority of disaffected parents and carers.

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.

29 June 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Buckden CofE Primary School, St Neots PE19 5TT

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited the school. I am extremely grateful to all pupils who shared their views with us in conversation or through the questionnaire. These provided helpful information that contributed to our judgements. Inspectors saw all of you learning and at play. We looked at your work and thought carefully about the progress that you have made this year. By the end of the inspection, we judged that Buckden is a satisfactory school. This means that while there are good things about it, there are also things that need improvement. These are the good things:

- the sensible and considerate way that you behave in and around the school
- the good progress that you have made in reading and the better progress you have made this year in writing, mathematics and science.
- the way that teachers talk to you and encourage you to work well with each other, do the right thing, appreciate each other's differences and reflect on important issues.
- some of the teaching is good.

Schools that are satisfactory can become good schools. I have left the staff and the governing body with some targets which they are keen to work on and which will help to move the school from satisfactory to good.

- More of you need to reach higher levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- More of the teaching should be as good as the best.
- The school must work harder to keep your parents and carers informed of what goes on in school and get back to them quickly when they have concerns.

You can all help too by concentrating very hard in every lesson to make the most of the time available for learning. Like you, I am looking forward to the arrival of the Olympic flame in the East Midlands region. I hope that you will enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of watching the London 2012 events during the summer break.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**