

Leedon Lower School

Highfield Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3LZ

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, too few reach the higher levels in reading and mathematics. Girls do less well than boys in mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils supported at school action plus do not always make as much progress as other pupils.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and marking is not always followed up to check that pupils have achieved their targets.
- Targets for staff are not precise enough to show whether they have been met and are bringing about improvements in teaching.
- The role of subject and key stage leaders is not sufficiently developed. They are not doing enough to strengthen teaching or improve achievement.
- Governors do not have the necessary skills to hold the school properly to account for the quality of its teaching and pupil achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in the Reception classes make consistently good progress. The achievement of other groups of pupils is also improving because teaching is better matched to pupils' needs.
- Teaching programmes are rich and varied and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good because teachers consistently manage behaviour well.
- All staff ensure pupils are well cared for. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy at school.
- Attendance is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, one inspector made a number of short visits to lessons with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed three small group sessions where pupils receive additional support.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2. Other meetings were held with the chair of governors and one other governor, school staff and middle and senior leaders. A telephone discussion was held between the lead inspector and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 41 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with many parents and carers, informally, at the start of the school day.
- They observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and teacher appraisal, minutes of the governing body's meetings, records relating to attendance, behaviour, safety and bullying and safeguarding, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils reading.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gillian Walley

Additional Inspector

Stephanie James

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This Lower school is larger than the average school of this type.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The majority of pupils are White British; around 6% are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language is well below average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A pre-school facility shares the school site but was not part of the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that it is consistently at least good by ensuring all teachers:
 - have high expectations and insist that pupils always produce work of a high standard
 - check how well pupils have responded to marking and feedback
 - constantly check the progress made by the most and least able pupils, and particularly by girls in mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
 - plan lessons that are well paced and matched to pupils' individual needs
 - provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop independence and think for themselves
 - make better use of questioning and assessment in lessons to check pupils' understanding and adjust the lesson if necessary.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring:
 - governors urgently receive training to help them check the effectiveness of the school's efforts to improve teaching and achievement, and to hold it to account more effectively
 - subject and key stage leaders receive appropriate training both in the interpretation of information on pupils' progress and in the skills required to model good teaching practice for other staff to follow
 - strategic planning concentrates on improving pupil progress and includes precise targets and measures so that the school can quickly tell whether it is making the improvements it is seeking.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although achievement is improving, particularly in Years 3 and 4 in recent years, the rate of improvement has not been quick enough for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils enter the Reception classes with skills and abilities which are below those typically seen for their age. Pupils usually make good progress because teaching is good. Consequently, most pupils are reaching the standards expected at the start of Year 1.
- In Years 1 and 2 pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They have frequent opportunities to read to adults and the vast majority are able to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to read difficult words. However, too few achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Girls do not achieve as well as boys in mathematics.
- By the time they leave, pupils generally achieve standards in English and mathematics which are broadly in line with expectations and are sometimes higher. Pupils enjoy their learning. They particularly enjoy writing, and the way that the school enhances and enriches the subjects that pupils study plays an important part in motivating pupils, particularly boys, to engage enthusiastically in writing and reading activities.
- Pupils speaking English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs get better at much the same rate as similar pupils nationally. In contrast, pupils supported at school action plus make less progress than their peers.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium achieve similar standards to those of other pupils because the school has increased the number of support staff employed to help them and this is improving the progress made by this group of pupils.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistently good over time and consequently the achievement of pupils has not been improving fast enough. Teaching has not always fully met the needs of higher-ability pupils in Years 1 and 2 or the needs of pupils supported at school action plus.
- Inspectors nonetheless saw many examples of good teaching, particularly in Reception. Where teaching is good, lessons typically progress at a good pace and activities are well matched to the needs of pupils. Teachers communicate high expectations and teaching assistants contribute well to pupil progress. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson pupils were engaged enthusiastically in 'bringing a character to life'. They were able to do this successfully because the teacher used a creative approach incorporating aspects of drama.
- Where teaching is less successful, lessons are not always sufficiently planned to meet the individual needs of pupils, which sometimes results in insufficient challenge for higher-ability pupils or inappropriately pitched work for lower-ability pupils. Pupils are not always given opportunities to think for themselves and develop independence.

- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not consistently matched to the pupil's individual needs. The teaching of those receiving the pupil premium is effectively enabling these pupils to make similar progress to that of other pupils.
- Teachers' marking and other feedback generally help pupils to set targets for improvement. They are not always followed up by teachers or pupils and targets are not in place for all subjects.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line inspection questionnaire feel that their children are making good progress and are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they are keen to succeed. They behave well during lessons and at play time as a result of the successful implementation of policies and procedures which are consistently followed by all staff.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and well mannered and they have good relationships with each other, regardless of age and race. Pupils also have positive relationships with adults who consistently model high standards of behaviour and respect.
- Pupils enjoy school and those spoken to by inspectors both formally and informally were clearly proud of it. As a result attendance is above average and there have been no exclusions in recent years. In addition, there are very few incidents of poor behaviour over time.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They say that bullying is rare but should it occur, teachers and other adults deal with matters swiftly and effectively. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of safety issues and they appreciate the good levels of care they receive from adults. One pupil made matters clear to an inspector, 'I always feel safe here as everyone is kind to each other'.
- The school ensures that there are good levels of supervision at play time and pupils play and interact together appropriately.
- The main reason why pupils' behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding is because pupils do not have a thorough understanding of the different types of bullying and so they are not fully equipped with the skills and competencies to manage such situations, should they occur.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher, supported by her senior team, has created a positive climate and ethos in the school. There is a shared sense of ambition and drive from all members of the school community to improve achievement and this was evident from the large number of staff questionnaires returned to inspectors.
- However, leadership and management require improvement because improvements in the quality of teaching have only happened recently. Although achievement has been improving steadily, particularly in Years 3 and 4, it has not been improving fast enough because there is not enough challenge from governors and the roles of subject and key stage leaders are not

strong enough.

- The headteacher is aware of the weaknesses and is taking steps to address them. Subject and key stage leaders have been encouraged to make judgements of teaching and achievement and to support other staff. Other teachers have observed their colleagues teaching and have made suggestions for improvement. This is relatively recent work, however, and is not yet used systematically enough to ensure more pupils make good and outstanding progress.
- School improvement planning accurately identifies the most important development priorities to raise achievement. However, plans do not contain targets or measures that would tell the school whether it is improving achievement quickly enough.
- The management of staff performance requires improvement. Targets for staff are not consistently precise enough to show whether or not they have been met. The school does link teachers' pay and progression through the salary levels sufficiently to their impact on pupils' achievement but the targets set for teachers are not precise enough.
- The subjects that pupils study are enriched by a wide range of trips and visits such as the 'Magic Carpet' music project, Victorian days and a project called 'To the beat of a different drum', for example. The numerous activities which take place enable pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding to a good level, and this is a strength.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The headteacher has excellent relationships with parents who clearly value her visibility and willingness to listen to their views. Parents also appreciate the support they are given to support their children with home learning projects.
- The local authority is providing an appropriate level of support to the school. For example, the regular support from a consultant has helped the school to more accurately evaluate strengths and areas for development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors are committed to the school and they have been fully engaged in developing its ethos and vision. The Chair is relatively new to post. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding; all staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is spent and the difference it is making, and ensure it is used to support the relevant pupils and keep a close eye on the budget. However, governors do not hold the school fully to account for the quality of teaching or determine how achievement compares with other schools because they have not received appropriate training. Neither do they receive sufficient information to know whether good teachers are rewarded and underperformance addressed. They are aware of decisions made regarding the budget but their lack of knowledge about achievement means they are not in a position to ensure full value for money.

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	109509
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	401059

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	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Field
Headteacher	Frances Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2010
Telephone number	01525 374713
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Email address	f.godfrey@cbc.beds.sch.uk

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