

Shillington Lower School

Greenfields, Shillington, Hitchin, SG5 3NX

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children in the Reception class are well taught and learn quickly.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in writing because they get lots of opportunities to practise their writing across different lessons and subjects.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons which help pupils of all abilities to do well and learn the skills they need for their next stage of education.
- Pupils are clear about what they need to learn in each lesson and teachers' thoughtful marking and comments help them to improve their work.
- Pupils behave well, concentrate on their work, are safe and get on well with each other.
- Pupils understand and share the moral values that are promoted well across the school.
- Leaders have improved the way that early reading is taught across the school.
- Leaders have a clear focus on making sure that all pupils make the best progress they can.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide enough guidance for the additional adults who provide extra help to pupils who are struggling.
- There are missed opportunities to use technology to promote independent research and reading and to communicate more widely with parents.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons of which four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils read.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff.
- The inspector took account of 55 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as parents' views, which were communicated orally and in writing.
- The inspector also took account of 20 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about the progress of pupils, planning and monitoring documents, reports from external school advisers, behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nicola Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a lower school and is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British and all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding to support particular groups of children, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Since September 2010, the school was led by a headteacher shared with another school and subsequently by an acting headteacher. The new headteacher took up her post in January 2013.
- The school has been awarded the Values Mark and has achieved the International School's Bronze Award and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders improve the proportion of outstanding teaching of reading and mathematics by:
 - sharing existing best practice more widely across the school
 - giving teachers more opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in other schools
 - making sure that pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills across all subjects and in independent research
 - making sure that teachers plan well for the contribution of support staff and that this is closely linked to the regular reviews of pupils' progress
 - sharing approaches to promotion of girls' confidence and progress in mathematics.
- Ensure that leaders further improve communication with parents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children are well taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children join the school from a range of settings and backgrounds with skills that are typical of children their age. The adults in the Reception class plan a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities which help them to quickly learn new skills.
- Early reading skills are taught well across the school. Last year nearly three quarters of pupils in Year 1 could use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to read unfamiliar words. This year teachers have updated the way they teach phonics to make sure all pupils can confidently build up words, including some older pupils who find this difficult.
- Year 2 test results show that pupils attain well in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4. This means that most leave the school with achievement which is as expected or better than expected for pupils of their age.
- Pupils do especially well in writing. During the inspection, children were observed excitedly writing letters for mailing in the Reception class 'post office'. In other classes pupils were avidly making notes of everything they could see in a willow pattern plate, writing recipes for a fantasy pie and making their own World War 2 identity cards.
- Relatively few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. Last year, not all older pupils eligible for this additional funding did as well as their classmates, despite the extra support which was provided. This year, staff are making more systematic support available to these pupils across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Although they are relatively few in number, they are well supported by the staff at the school. Their well-being is carefully monitored by caring staff and extra help is provided for them in class.
- Girls and boys make similar rates of progress. A few girls lack confidence in mathematics so teachers are focusing on giving them extra help to improve their understanding and to make sure they catch up quickly.
- By the time pupils leave Year 4 they are well prepared for middle school. Pupils are encouraged to ask and answer questions and give their ideas on how they and their classmates can improve their work. This means they leave school confident and articulate.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Children work very well in the Reception class. This includes times when they are sitting together on the carpet and when they work in small groups with an adult. The adults plan lessons well to help children learn things in different ways.
- Writing is taught very well throughout the school. Pupils are aware of the high standards expected. As a result they often provide their classmates with helpful writing tips when they look

at each other's work.

- Early reading skills are taught well and volunteers from the school community hear pupils read regularly. In some classes, pupils enthusiastically carry out different reading tasks to learn more about the topics they are studying. Older pupils do not have enough opportunities to research different subjects independently.
- Some teachers use technology well to help children to learn. In the Reception class, for example, digital photographs of shapes the children had made with their bodies in a previous lesson helped them to remember the mathematical names of different shapes. Opportunities are sometimes missed in other classes to make the best use of the available technology.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Teachers have high expectations in class and pupils respond well to these. This means that pupils enjoy working hard and make good progress in most lessons.
- Teachers know their pupils well. This helps them to make sure that the questions they ask are at the right level for each child. It also helps them to plan a range of different tasks in each lesson for pupils of different abilities.
- Additional adults are valued members of staff and make a good contribution to the learning of individual pupils. However teachers do not always provide enough guidance and support to other adults when they are helping small groups of pupils, particularly if they are working outside the classroom.
- Marking is good. There is a clear system to make sure pupils know what they should be learning. Pupils thoughtfully judge their own work and progress and teachers give them very good feedback through their marking.
- Teachers take great care to interest pupils in subjects such as history and geography. Role play areas in each classroom give pupils a real opportunity to immerse themselves in the past, whether this is an air raid shelter during the Blitz or a hospital for troops during the Crimean War.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils like and respect their teachers and the other adults who help them. Teachers model friendly and considerate behaviour, which pupils emulate. This means pupils behave well around school and in lessons.
- There is a strong focus on values such as tolerance, honesty or thoughtfulness which are highlighted during different weeks. Pupils and teachers talk about the particular value and refer to it during their lessons. This reinforces the sense of the school as a community and as part of the local community.
- Pupils are proud of their school and talk positively about the experiences they have there. Their views are taken seriously and the school regularly polls their opinions. In the last survey the thing which most pupils liked about the school was their 'teachers who care'.
- Parents and carers are also positive about the school and the majority feel their children are happy, safe and well cared for. The new headteacher is aware of any reservations and is

working hard to address them. The school also plans to improve communication with parents by developing a new website.

- Pupils say that bullying, unkind behaviour and name calling is rare and is dealt with quickly. They are confident that any problems can be resolved by telling an adult.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to be there.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has made a good start to her time at the school. Building on existing strengths, she has identified clear priorities that have been welcomed by staff.
- The headteacher and senior staff are clear about what they need to do to help the school improve further. Senior staff at the school developed a detailed plan of their future priorities which are clearly linked to raising standards further. Some of these have already been realised, such as improving the teaching of phonics and providing high quality of marking and feedback.
- Along with senior staff and governors, the new headteacher is leading a programme to accelerate the progress of identified groups of pupils. This includes boosting the confidence and skills of some girls in mathematics and improving the extra help provided to the few pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- Partnerships with other local schools are strong. In particular the school has strong links with its local middle school and the transfer programme it has developed prepares pupils to settle in quickly.
- Relationships with the local community are also strong. Parent helpers and local volunteers provide impressive support. This includes support for hearing children read as well as involvement in 'Enrichment Afternoons'. They are also active in raising money for the school.
- Local authority advisers have continued to monitor standards at the school and to encourage liaison and partnerships between local schools. Because this is a successful school, the local authority has given little support in promoting school improvement, but offer relevant training as well as access to well-regarded services to support behaviour and pupils' well being.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have played a key role in supporting the leadership of the school during the period prior to the appointment of the new headteacher. As a result they are very well informed about the school's performance. They know about the quality of teaching and the performance management arrangements, and how these relate to pay. They know exactly how the school spends its pupil premium money and the impact this has had on the eligible pupils. They are fully aware of the required information which must be made available on the school's new website. They have made good use of the information provided by the acting headteacher and an external consultant to support and hold the school to account. They have ensured that requirements on matters relating to safeguarding are fully met.

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	109480
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	403089

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	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Summerfield
Headteacher	Juliet Parker
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2007
Telephone number	01462 711637
Fax number	01462 711637
Email address	shilling@cbc.beds.sch.uk

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