

Foxdell Infant School

Dallow Road, Luton, LU1 1TG

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics vary from class to class, and not enough pupils make good progress.
- There is not enough consistently good teaching. Teachers do not always plan work that is matched to the needs of all the pupils.
- Teaching does not generally ensure that pupils develop skills in working independently and thinking for themselves.
- Teachers' marking does too little to help pupils improve their work.
- Systems for checking on progress in the Reception classes are not effective in helping teachers plan the next steps in children's learning. Planning focuses too much on detail about activities rather than on what children are to learn.
- Teachers with responsibilities such as subject leaders, do not have the range of skills needed to provide effective direction without the help of senior staff.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are keen to learn and behave well. They are safe and are well cared for.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Senior leaders and governors are clearly focused on improving teaching and raising standards. Attainment in Year 2 is rising and instances of inadequate teaching have been eliminated.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons. They were accompanied by the headteacher during four of these.
- They looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to a sample of pupils read in Years 1 and 2, and held discussions with pupils about their learning and experience of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants, family workers and the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- They looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, the local authority evaluation report, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks and data relating to pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the online Parent View survey. They supplemented information from this sample through informal discussions with parents.

Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Bell-Cook	Additional Inspector
Matthew Klimcke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and most have English as an additional language. There is an increasing number of new arrivals from Eastern Europe who have little or no English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is in line with the national average.
- There is on-site childcare, including the Fox Cubs Nursery, provided in a children's centre. This is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.
- During the last two years there have been a number of acting headteachers and other changes in staffing. In the autumn term of 2012 the current headteacher was appointed on an interim basis, with the post being made substantive from January 2013. A number of teachers in posts of responsibility are relatively newly in post. Continuity in teaching and learning has also been adversely affected by widespread changes in the deployment of teaching staff from the start of the autumn term 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2014, make teaching and achievement consistently good or better in Key Stage 1 by making sure that teachers always:
 - set work at the right levels for pupils of different abilities so that they are made to think hard throughout each lesson
 - ensure that pupils develop skills in working independently
 - make their marking of pupils' work more effective by setting out clearly what pupils need to do to improve, and checking that they act on the comments made.
- By January 2014, improve provision in the Reception classes by:
 - ensuring that the assessments of children's learning recorded by adults clearly evaluate children's achievements and set out what the next steps in learning ought to be
 - using the information from assessments to tailor the challenges provided for each individual child more accurately to promote their rapid progress
 - ensuring that planning focuses clearly on what children are intended to learn.
- Ensure that subject leaders develop the skills necessary to monitor and evaluate accurately the effectiveness of provision without the need for support from senior leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 2 have been falling in reading, writing and mathematics over the past three years. As a consequence, standards in 2012 were significantly lower than the national averages in reading and mathematics, and broadly in line with the national average in writing.
- Through the leadership of the new headteacher and effective action from the senior leadership team, this situation is being turned around. The senior leadership team's very strong focus on improving pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, particularly in Year 2, is having a positive impact. Assessment data and inspection evidence suggest that most pupils in the current Year 2 classes are on course to attain nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the school year.
- In all year groups there is some variation in the rates of progress made by pupils from class to class, and this reflects the uneven quality of teaching. To some extent this variation is the consequence of widespread changes in the deployment of teaching staff. These meant that in many instances teachers needed time to adjust their teaching for an unfamiliar year group. Where this was the case, some pupils got off to a slower start to the year than others.
- While most children in the Reception classes make the expected progress from their below average starting points, fewer than normal exceed expectations. This is because the activities provided for children are not adjusted well enough to increase the level of individual challenges. For example, adults missed many opportunities to raise the level of difficulty of a 'play' activity, as children investigated the ways in which water moves through pipes.
- Assessments carried out in Key Stage 1 are suitably rigorous and accurately summarise pupils' achievements. These show that, while most pupils make expected or better progress, a few underachieve, particularly in writing.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have good knowledge of phonics (the sounds made by letters) and apply their reading skills well in other subjects. They say that they enjoy reading, and read regularly both at home and school.
- The progress made by the large majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding develop their skills, knowledge and understanding at similar rates to their classmates; this means that the gap in attainment is not closing and they remain around a term behind. When their attainment is compared with that of similar pupils nationally, these pupils do less well in reading and mathematics but match the national average for those supported by pupil premium in writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching in English and mathematics is inconsistent across the school and it does not enable pupils to learn consistently well. In most instances this is because the same tasks are set for all pupils and therefore do not provide achievable challenges across the ability range in the class.
- Teachers' use of questioning is uneven. In some classes, it does not develop pupils' learning

well enough because it limits pupils to short answers rather than encouraging reasoning and discussion.

- In too many instances, teachers do not use their monitoring of pupils' work in lessons to adjust the pitch of work for individuals who find the tasks too easy.
- In some classes, teaching is too rigid and, consequently, pupils do not have enough opportunity to think for themselves and develop skills as independent learners.
- In Years 1 and 2, the quality of feedback given to pupils through teachers' marking does little to help pupils improve their work. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but in most instances teachers' comments are solely used to help motivate pupils and celebrate their successes.
- Pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work is insecure. There are too few instances of teachers setting out the next steps for pupils to achieve and little evidence that pupils act on the comments when they are made by teachers in their books. Consequently, the same errors continue to be made.
- In the Reception classes, planning focuses more on the activities that children will do than the intended learning that needs to take place. As a result, the assessments made of children's independent achievements tend to describe what they are doing instead of evaluating how well they are learning and what the next steps ought to be.
- Consistent strengths in teaching include the good relationships between teachers and their pupils, and teachers' management of pupils. In all classes, teachers ensure that there are clear routines, such as the way in which pupils are expected to respond when teachers call them to attention. These help ensure that time is not wasted.
- In some classes, pupils achieve consistently well. This is because learning is well structured so that the level of challenge is gradually increased during the course of lessons. In these lessons, pupils have good opportunities to practise and develop the skills learned.
- Senior leaders are effective teachers and lead by example. They are currently deployed within Year 2 in order to help raise standards. For example, a lesson about multiplication facts taken by a senior leader resulted in outstanding learning. This was because teaching provided well-judged challenges and plenty of opportunity for pupils to share ideas and challenge their own and others' thinking.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is an orderly community in which consideration and respect for others is clearly evident. Pupils are polite and friendly and are keen to talk about what they are learning.
 - Pupils are invariably attentive in lessons and are keen to do their best. Where lessons are interesting and well paced, pupils show high levels of curiosity and concentrate well on the tasks set for them.
 - Typically, pupils get on well with one another. They behave well in lessons and around the school. There have been occasional instances of unacceptable behaviour, but school records show that these most often result from minor disagreements and are dealt with quickly and
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sensitively. There is no evidence of bullying of any type.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and their parents and carers agree. Procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are rigorous. For example, parents commented appreciatively about the systems in place to ensure that their children are handed over to them safely at the end of the school day.
- The school is strongly focused on improving attendance, and rates have steadily improved over the past three years. Despite this improvement, which includes a large reduction in the number of pupils who are regularly absent, attendance is below the national average for primary schools.
- The school's family workers have played a major role in helping improve punctuality and attendance rates through their work within the local community. Extended family visits overseas, taken by a small number of families, continue to be the main reason for below average attendance.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because pupils' rates of progress are too variable and teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Currently, school improvement is dependent on the actions of senior leaders. With the exception of the leader for special educational needs, other teachers with key responsibilities lack the range of skills necessary to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress independently. The initiatives now underway, and driven by senior leaders, have not yet been in place long enough for the school to demonstrate the impact of leadership on pupils' achievement over a sustained period of time. For this reason the school's capacity to improve is not yet good.
- The leader for special educational needs has been in post for a number of years and has developed good levels of expertise. She maintains thorough and accurate records, which she evaluates well. As a result, she provides effective support for both staff and pupils.
- The local authority has provided useful support to the school in helping to resolve staffing difficulties, and has helped interim headteachers in evaluating the school's performance, for example through the analysis of data. However, the local authority's 'light-touch' monitoring of the school's overall effectiveness has resulted in an over-generous view of pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum provided is broad and balanced and is enriched through a range of well-attended extra-curricular activities. Where pupils are involved in the selection of topics to be studied, such as 'amazing animals' in Year 2 they are particularly enthusiastic about their work.
- The money available through pupil premium is used effectively to ensure equality of opportunity for eligible pupils.
- Partnerships with local schools are helping improve teaching and learning. For example, staff training in the use of sign language to enhance communication has helped to improve learning for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. It is also being used to good effect to help pupils in the early stages of learning English, such as new arrivals from Eastern Europe.
- Systems for checking on the progress made by pupils in Years 1 and 2 through records of

teachers' assessments are secure. This is because the accuracy of teachers' judgements about the attainment of pupils is closely checked.

- In the Reception classes, systems for monitoring children's progress are less secure because the assessments on which they are based focus too much on supervised activities rather than children's independent learning. The ways in which assessments are collated, with information for English and mathematics kept in separate books, and assessments for all other areas of learning filed elsewhere, is inefficient. It means that there is no single overview of individual children's achievements to help adults tailor activities more closely to learning needs.
- The school is effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. All required checks on adults working with pupils are in place.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is generally well informed through reports provided by the school, governors' visits to the school and its members' close links within the local community. It is well aware of recent issues relating to staffing and the quality of teaching, and holds the school to account for its actions. However, it is yet to come to grips fully with the impact of pupil premium funding. The Chair of the Governing Body is in regular contact with the headteacher and has an accurate understanding of the recent improvements in attainment. She has a sound awareness of the linkage between teachers' pay and performance.
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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	109572
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	413375

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tafheen Sharif
Headteacher	Justine Abbott
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2012
Telephone number	01582 736529
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