

Portfields Combined School

Westbury Lane, Newport Pagnell, MK16 8PS

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The standards reached by pupils in both English and mathematics are consistently above the national average. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in all subjects.
- Pupils write at length in a number of different subjects, so they develop their writing skills well.
- Teaching is typically at least good, and some teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs are well supported, so they make good progress.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils enjoy reading for learning and for pleasure.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of interesting lessons, visits, clubs and other experiences. This helps them to enjoy school.
- Pupils feel safe and behave exceptionally well. They are very proud of their school, and want to succeed.
- School leaders have created a caring atmosphere in school. Although this is a large school, pupils are known and valued as individuals.
- The school has good relationships with parents and carers, who are supportive of the school and its leaders.
- The governing body is ambitious for the school, and supports school leaders well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The school's leaders have not, in the past, been systematic in checking the progress of pupils in order to provide the help needed so they all can make rapid progress. As a result, pupils' rates of progress have fluctuated, and recently fell.
- School leaders do not check the quality of teaching frequently enough to make sure it is improving.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. In some lessons work is not difficult enough to make all pupils think hard, especially the more able. Teachers' introductions to lessons are sometimes too long.
- Teachers' marking, although detailed, does not always clearly tell pupils how to improve their work, and pupils do not always have the chance to respond to this marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part lessons, including two joint observations carried out with school leaders. All classes and teachers were seen. Inspectors also attended two assemblies, listened to children read and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspection team spoke to a number of parents and carers informally, and took account of the 60 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire of parents and carers. They also considered 65 staff questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with staff and school leaders. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and talked informally to pupils at break and lunchtimes. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including the school's plans for improvement, school information on pupils' progress and at nationally published results. They looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and at how well the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection team

Mike Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shela Rowan

Additional Inspector

Andy George

Additional Inspector

Linda Rowley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It has Early Years Foundation Stage classes for reception-aged children.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is much lower than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is the extra funding for pupils in local authority care, from forces families and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is much lower than average. Almost all of these supported pupils in this school are those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than the start of the Reception Year is higher than the national average.
- A privately run after-school club operates on the school site. It was not included in this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that work is difficult enough to make all pupils think hard, especially the more-able pupils
 - allowing pupils to begin work quickly, without a long introduction from the teacher, so they can make rapid progress
 - making sure that teachers' marking clearly shows pupils how to improve their work, and that pupils have the chance to respond to this marking.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels so that leaders:
 - more frequently check the quality of teaching
 - check more systematically the progress of all pupils in different subjects, and take action where it is needed, so all pupils can make rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement across the school is good. They make good progress and achieve well in all subjects.
- Children enter Reception with levels of skills and understanding which are broadly in line with those expected for children of their age, but they are a little weaker in their writing skills. Their progress is good so by the time they start Year 1 their skills are at slightly above the levels expected for their age.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils' progress is good and sometimes outstanding. By the end of Year 2 their standards in reading, writing and mathematics have for a number of years been significantly above national averages.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils' standards in both English and mathematics have also been significantly above the national average for a number of years.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported and taught well. Their individual needs are identified early, and effective extra help is given quickly. As a result these pupils make good progress which is in line with other pupils in school.
- Pupils who join the school after the Reception class are supported well, so they make similar progress to others once they are settled in.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, also achieve well.
- The number of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium in each year group is small. Many are also disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve higher standards than those of similar pupils nationally. In this school they are around one term behind the other pupils in English, and around three terms behind in mathematics. This gap is closing steadily.
- Pupils learn to read successfully. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letter make) is effective. Pupils read books which are well matched to their abilities, and are encouraged to read at home. Most pupils read well by Year 2. Pupils enjoy reading for learning and pleasure. By Year 6, pupils are enthusiastic about their favourite books and authors.
- Pupils write at length in different subjects, for example in history, science and geography, so they develop their writing skills well. Standards of writing are high.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. The proportions who reach the highest levels are significantly higher than national figures.
- Pupils' achievement is not outstanding because of some inconsistencies in their progress, especially in Key Stage 2. Although progress is generally good, in 2012 fewer pupils made or exceeded the progress that would be expected from them in both English and mathematics. School figures show that rates of progress continue to be variable in Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, and is sometimes outstanding. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and positive. Lessons are carefully planned to build on what pupils already know. Pupils respond well to the interesting tasks they are given.
- Teachers use questions well to check pupils' understanding. In an English lesson, for example, Year 3 pupils made outstanding progress in turning a story into a play script because the teacher's questions made them think hard.
- In the best lessons teachers expect a lot from pupils. In a Year 6 English lesson, for instance, pupils learned to use adverbial phrases in their writing. Although some found this challenging, almost all were successful by the end of the lesson.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. For example in a French lesson, Year 5 pupils made

outstanding progress because the teacher's competence in the language allowed her to structure the lesson carefully, and a native French-speaking adult offered effective extra help to individual pupils.

- In the most successful lessons teachers make sure that pupils understand how to improve their work. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils referred back to their previous work and discussed how they should improve their current piece of work. As a result of this, and of the teacher's excellent questions and high expectations, pupils made outstanding progress.
- A small amount of teaching still requires improvement. In some lessons work is not difficult enough, especially for the more able. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson on calculations involving money, for example, there was too little challenge for more-able pupils, who therefore made little progress.
- Teachers' introductions to lessons are sometimes too long. In a Year 4 geography lesson, for example, although the teacher provided pupils with some interesting information and images, pupils had to listen for a long time before starting work on their own. This limited their progress.
- Teachers' marking is frequent and detailed. However, it does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils often do not have the chance to respond to this marking.
- Teaching assistants provide good support which is closely matched to the individual needs of those pupils who need extra help with their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons. Their attitudes to learning are very positive. They are keen to answer questions in class and offer their opinions. They cooperate well, and can concentrate on their work for long periods of time.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is exemplary. Movement around the site is calm and orderly, without the need for close supervision by adults. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, because the school promotes their moral development well. They like the rewards they get for behaving and working well. The school's 'consequences' for poor behaviour are rarely needed.
- Pupils say they enjoy school. This view is strongly supported by parents and carers. Pupils are extremely proud of their school, and are keen to succeed. They are confident, friendly, articulate and considerate, and they treat adults and each other with respect.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, and they have a good understanding of potential dangers posed, for example, by the internet.
- Racist incidents and pupil exclusions from school are extremely rare.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying like name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare, and school records confirm this. Pupils know how to report bullying, and are confident it will be dealt with effectively.
- Pupils' attendance is above national figures and improving. Very few pupils are persistently absent.
- Parents and carers are confident their children will be well looked after. They rightly think that pupils' behaviour in school is outstanding. Staff also feel that pupils' behaviour is excellent.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders have created a calm and caring atmosphere in school, with high expectations of pupils' effort and behaviour. Although this is a large school, all pupils are well known by their teachers, and are valued as individuals.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers' targets are based on pupils' achievement and are linked to teachers' salary progression.
- The school has good relationships with parents and carers. The large majority speak highly of the school, and are supportive of the school and its leaders.

- Extra funding from the pupil premium has been spent well on additional in-class support, extra help for pupils at lunchtimes and on financial help for supported pupils' school uniform, music tuition and residential visits.
- The school's curriculum meets the needs of different pupils well. Pupils enjoy a range of interesting topics, lessons, visits and other experiences. Pupils develop their numeracy and literacy skills well across different subjects. A number of clubs and activities for pupils at lunchtime and after school help to increase pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted effectively. School assemblies promote their spiritual development well. Various topics and initiatives help pupils learn about people from different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. As a result, all groups of pupils get on well together in school.
- School leaders are committed to equality of opportunity. They make sure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school receives very little support from the local authority, as this foundation school was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection.
- The school's arrangements to keep its pupils safe meet legal requirements.
- School leaders have not in the past been systematic in checking the progress of all groups of pupils. Although the progress of individual pupils is checked and discussed with class teachers, school leaders do not analyse this information closely enough. This means that some pupils have not had get the help they need to make rapid progress. As a result, pupils' rates of progress have fluctuated recently, and fell in 2012.
- School leaders do not regularly check the quality of teaching in school. Lesson observations are largely limited to those carried out annually for teachers' performance management. School leaders have a generally accurate view of the quality of teaching. However, they do not have information that is precise enough on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, so they are not able to make sure that the quality of teaching is improving.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is ambitious to improve the school. Governors have a good understanding of what is happening in the school. They have a working knowledge of the quality of teaching, how teachers' performance is managed and the links with their salary progression. They have a good idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but are not closely involved in the school's self-evaluation, or in identifying areas for improvement. Governors support school leaders well, and are increasingly effective in holding them to account. They are becoming better informed about the performance of the school compared to that of other schools nationally, and are aware of the need to focus on pupils' progress. They oversee the school's budget well, and know how funds from the pupil premium are spent. They are keen to improve their skills, and several governors have undertaken further training.

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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	131718
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	413278

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	679
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Carter
Headteacher	Mary St-Amour
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 May 2010
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