

Downside Primary School

Chaul End Lane, Luton, LU4 8EZ

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although teaching has improved, too few lessons are good or outstanding.
- Levels of achievement in mathematics are not as good as those in English.
- Pupils do not make rapid enough progress in the development of their vocabulary to benefit fully from their learning experiences across a range of subjects.
- Although leadership and management are good and have raised the standard of teaching in this relatively new school, it is still not the case that teaching is consistently good or outstanding.
- Governors have made a strong impact on standards of teaching in the school because they have supported the headteacher's robust system of managing staff performance. These measures have not fully impacted on levels of achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils at the school behave well and feel safe and cared for by their teachers and other staff who help them.
- Leaders and managers have made a notable recent impact in raising the standard of teaching and the levels of achievement of pupils now on the school roll.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited forty-two lessons, of which fifteen were joint observations with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders and managers, teachers and support staff, the vice chair of the Governing Body and another governor, various groups of students, and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of the 58 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, along with the views of around twenty other parents who spoke to the inspectors during the inspection at the school gate or from whom they received correspondence.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, scrutinised the school’s data about students’ achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school’s performance. It also examined the work in students’ books and the homework set by teachers.
- Inspectors observed students as they moved around school at break and lunchtimes and when they were assisted in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

Inspection team

James McAtear, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kevin Morris	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector
Concetta Caruana	Additional Inspector
Tusharkana Chakraborti	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Downside is much larger than the average size primary school. Pupils are taught in five forms of entry. Most classes are taught in mixed ability groupings but a few, for example in year 6 mathematics, are placed in sets according to ability.
- The school was formed on 1 September 2011 following the amalgamation of two schools, it has grown substantially since then and is therefore a relatively new school.
- Very few pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are of minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language is well above that found nationally. Many, on entry, are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action, the proportion receiving support at school action plus and who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- There are no pupils who are educated away from the school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum level expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching through increasing the level of challenge provided by all teachers to pupils by:
 - ensuring teachers use questioning and set tasks which make pupils think more deeply and more independently about the things they are learning.
- Improve achievement in reading by:
 - providing greater opportunities to widen pupils' vocabulary through reading across the greatest possible range of topics.
- Improve achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring all teachers plan lessons which set work at the correct levels for all pupils so that all are challenged to produce their best work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils arrive at the school with starting points that vary from year group to year group. A higher than average proportion of pupils do not remain in the school throughout the whole of their primary education. Overall, however, starting points are below those found nationally.
- Pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English. This is because, in the past, the teaching of mathematics has not been good enough to secure good progress.
- The proportion of pupils who make expected levels of progress in English compares favourably with that found nationally when pupils' starting points are taken into account, and when account is taken of the fact that many pupils have only recently joined the school. The proportion making expected levels of progress in mathematics does not reach the same levels as those in English. Current data held by the school and observations of learning during mathematics lessons indicate that in 2013 achievement in mathematics has been improving.
- Pupils read widely and often. However, not all pupils have a wide enough vocabulary to allow them to get the best from all subjects in the school. This is particularly the case when pupils join the school with a limited understanding of English. The school has, however, designed a programme that is now working well in encouraging pupils to read a broad range of texts. An example of this is the arrangement the school has where parents come in to school to read along with their children. Pupils respond well to this but this has not been in place long enough to bring full benefits to the pupils.
- The progress made by pupils in a wide range of subjects is improving rapidly. For example, pupils make good progress in history and in personal and social education.
- Pupils for whom the school received pupil premium funding during 2012 made progress at similar rates to other pupils in English. In mathematics they made less progress than their classmates. The school uses this funding to employ more teaching staff to provide additional teaching and one-to-one tuition for this group of pupils in literacy and numeracy.
- The gap between pupils receiving pupil premium funding and their classmates in English in 2012, was one and a half terms. Current data suggests this gap has narrowed only very slightly, to just under one and a half terms. In 2012 the gap in mathematics was just over two and a half terms. This has now narrowed to just under two terms.
- Pupils who have a disability or who have special educational needs make progress which is in line with that made by similar pupils nationally and those who are supported at School Action make progress that is in line with that achieved by other pupils at the school.
- Children in the early years make good progress. They enter the early years at low levels of learning and leave at average levels. During this time they learn well as the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and numeracy is good.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although teaching in the school is now better it requires further improvement. This is because teaching in mathematics has not been as good as that in English. The headteacher and other school leaders have taken robust action to improve this. Although teaching is improving rapidly it is not yet good enough.
- In the best lessons, for example during Year 6 and Year 2, the teaching challenges pupils to produce their best work because the quality of questioning helps pupils to think more deeply about their learning and the tasks set are at the correct levels to allow pupils to apply their learning independently to their own work. However, this is not yet the case consistently enough throughout the school.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully and make the best use of the other adults who help them. They work well with these, and those staff who assist teachers are skilful in making sure they give pupils the help they need at an individual level to improve their work.
- Pupils say they enjoy their learning. This is because their teachers make lessons fun and because they are active during their learning. They are given opportunities to discuss their learning and the quality of these discussions is good.
- The quality of homework set for pupils is high. Pupils respond well to this and, as a result, are enthusiastic about the tasks they have to complete.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers use a consistent method so that pupils are not confused and can build on what they are learning from week to week. Teachers are skilful in their approach and build their teaching on a detailed knowledge of the individual pupils they work with.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They are positive and encouraging in the comments they make but are also clear about the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work further. They comment about the improvements needed in a language that is appropriate for pupils and pupils respond well to this.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Teachers are clear about what each child has to do to improve further and plan lessons that build carefully on their needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons is good. This is because relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and warm. Pupils enjoy lessons because their teachers ensure the methods they use to teach pupils are engaging and fun.
- When pupils move from one lesson to another or play together during social times, they behave well. They treat each other with consideration and mix well together.
- Almost all staff and pupils, and the vast majority of parents whose views have been shared during the inspection either through Parent View, in correspondence or at the school gate say, correctly, that behaviour at the school is good.
- Students say they feel safe at the school and their parents agree. They say that teachers care

for them and have confidence that incidences of bullying, though rare, are dealt with effectively by their teachers and other adults who support them. They are well taught about a range of dangers associated with fire, water and the internet.

- Students mix well together. They help one another in lessons and are very willing to participate actively in the activities set up for them. They treat their teachers with respect and are well cared for by their teachers.
- Exclusions are uncommon at the school. Over time, the school has been notably successfully in improving the behaviour of those whose conduct needed to be better. It works well in partnership with other schools in the local authority, to achieve this.
- Levels of attendance are now above the national average and improving. Students are usually punctual in arriving to school and to lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management is good because the headteacher has made a notable recent impact on the quality of teaching at the school. The school is a relatively new school which has been formed from an amalgamation of two previous schools. Numbers of pupils in the school have grown markedly over a short period of time and many pupils have not completed the whole of their primary education at the school.
- The task of improving the quality of teaching has been a challenging one and although teaching still requires improvement it is much better than it previously was and is improving rapidly. This is because the headteacher has implemented a robust system for managing the performance of staff that has had a notable impact. She has been well supported in this by governors and other leaders in the school.
- The school's improvement plans are well focused on securing improvements in teaching and in achievement in mathematics in particular. Current data held by the school, and the observations carried out by inspectors confirm that the implementation of these plans is having a rapid and sustained impact on standards in the school.
- Leadership is now good throughout the school. For example, the school's leaders now track the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils well and plan interventions that are effective in getting back on track those pupils who may have fallen behind. The provision the school makes for meeting the needs of those supported at school action, action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is also well led.
- Parents, staff and pupils agree strongly with the statement that leadership in the school is good. The work of the inspection team confirmed this.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that matches the needs of the pupils. Its provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is effective. In one year 1 lesson, for example, a recent visit to a local farm was drawn upon to illustrate the importance of caring for others and for the world around us. As a result of this approach, pupils are able to relate what they are learning to the real world around them and make good progress in this aspect of their development.
- At the time of the inspection the school met its statutory requirements for safeguarding. For

example, pre-employment checks were carried out appropriately.

- The local authority provides effective support for this school on a light touch basis. It assists the school well in identifying clearly, and implementing, its priorities to improve achievement and teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance at the school is good. Governors know the school well and are able to give a clear account of its strengths and areas for development in teaching.
- They have a clear understanding of the progress made by pupils and have a thorough knowledge of the way the school spends the funding it receives for pupils supported by the pupil premium. They have a sound knowledge of the impact of this and, for example, are aware that the gap between these pupils and their classmates is narrowing.
- Governors have had a significant recent impact on standards of teaching because they have supported a robust system for managing staff performance that is implemented by the headteacher and other senior leaders.

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	109567
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	400234

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	848
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Talat Hafiz
Headteacher	Karen Hooker
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01582 587160
Fax number	01582 587169
Email address	downside.primary.admin@luton.gov.uk

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