

Templefield Lower School

Malham Close, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1AJ

Inspection dates 21 – 22 May 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

- The progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics varies from class to class. Too few pupils make good progress.
- Although there is some good teaching, in many lessons teachers' expectations are too low, the work that they plan for pupils is too easy, and the pace of teaching and learning is too slow.
- Teachers' marking often does little to help pupils improve their work.
- The way in which the school teaches phonics (the sounds made by letters) is not good enough.
- The effect that teaching has on helping pupils to learn is not fully checked by leaders and they do not use information about pupils' progress over time as a way of judging the overall quality of teaching. The school is therefore not improving quickly enough over time.
- The governing body does not hold the school to account for its actions.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders provide good role models in their own teaching and practice.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and courteous and relate well to one another and to adults. They have a clear understanding of how to keep safe.
- The school provides a caring environment, which pupils and families value.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons. They were accompanied by the headteacher during four observations.
- They looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to a sample of pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 4, and held discussions with pupils about their learning and experience of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior members of staff, learning support assistants (LSAs), and three members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with the school improvement partner (a representative of the local authority).
- They looked at a wide range of documents, including how the school judges its effectiveness, reports from the school improvement partner, the school development plan, safeguarding checks, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information relating to pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 18 members of staff along with 49 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

Michael Bucktin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Templefield Lower is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each of the five year-groups from Reception to Year 4. In addition, there is a class comprising Nursery-age children who are above the age of four. These children are admitted in January or April and attend for mornings only.
- Most pupils are White British and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is well below the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2014, ensure teaching is always good or outstanding and pupils do their very best by making sure that teachers:
 - expect more from their pupils and put greater pace and urgency into teaching and learning
 - pitch work at the right levels for pupils of different abilities so that they are made to think hard throughout each lesson
 - improve marking by setting out clearly what pupils need to do to improve their work and checking that they act on the comments made.
- Put more rigour into the teaching of phonics and ensure that pupils become ever better learners, with daily opportunities to use the skills learned in reading and spelling.
- Improve leadership at all levels, including governance, by making sure that:
 - there is effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and the impact it has on pupils' learning
 - judgements on the effectiveness of teaching are linked to the progress that pupils make
 - leaders monitor and improve the quality and presentation of work in pupils' books
 - the governing body becomes able to hold the school to account for its actions. An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Observations in lessons show that the learning of pupils is inconsistent because of variations in the quality of teaching between classes, subjects and year groups. The school's information on pupils' progress over time confirms this. For example, in 2011–12, pupils in Year 4 made good progress in writing and mathematics, while pupils in Year 2 made slow progress in writing.
- The vast majority of pupils start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are generally expected for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is broadly average. This represents expected progress, rather than good. Within this period there is some good progress but equally some instances of underachievement. By the end of Year 4 the attainment of pupils is above expectations because teaching here is good.
- The achievement of children in the Nursery and Reception classes varies according to the activities provided. Over-long whole class teaching slows progress when it reduces opportunities for children to play an active part in learning and as a result some children lose focus. However, where children are able to freely choose and investigate, they generally make good progress.
- The school's results in the 2012 Year 1 check of pupils' skills in using phonics were low in comparison with the national average. The senior leaders' felt that a key factor in these disappointing results was that lessons and activities did not support pupils' continuous progress over time in developing and applying their skills. The weak progress in developing reading skills was evident in the sample of pupils who were heard reading. Many were unsure of some of the common sounds that letters make when joined together and could not work out unfamiliar words.
- School information about pupils' progress show that, in most instances, the progress made by pupils eligible for premium funding varies in the same way as their classmates in Years 1 to 3. However, by the end of Year 4 the gap in attainment in English and mathematics between these pupils and their classmates is closed as a result of the rapid progress they make during this year. At this point, their attainment is broadly in line with expectations.
- The progress rates of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are similarly uneven. In some instances, for example in Year 2, pupils with severe learning needs make good progress because of the effective help provided by LSAs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is too little consistently good teaching. Pupils are not always given work that is challenging enough to extend their learning. This occurs, for example, in English lessons where photocopied worksheets are used and all pupils have the same task to complete regardless of their ability. In these instances, opportunities for pupils to write at length are limited by the layout of the sheets. The more able pupils invariably find this type of work undemanding.
- In too many lessons, teachers' expectations are too low. This occurs when they do not use pupils' previous learning as the basis for their planning. Pupils in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for example, were given work that was far too easy. Discussions with the pupils showed that they knew what the correct answers were before they began the task of cutting out and placing pictures in order of size.

- Weaknesses in teacher's management of lessons disrupts the pace of learning, for example where teachers stop pupils working merely to review what they have already done, rather than posing questions that add challenge to what they will do next. The pace of learning is too slow in phonics lessons because teachers lack confidence.
- Consistent strengths in teaching include the good relationships between teachers and pupils. In most instances these help ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning.
- Skilled LSAs provide good quality help for pupils who need it most, such as those with severe learning difficulties. This help enables these pupils to play as full a part in lessons as possible.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is most effective when adults interact with small groups of children to enhance their learning through play. This invariably takes place indoors. In the outdoor learning areas adults sometimes take on a supervisory, rather than teaching, role. Sometimes this is because of the need to ensure the wellbeing of pupils where play is more active.
- In the best lessons, teachers' good use of their knowledge of pupils' previous learning helps them provide challenging but achievable tasks that capture and hold pupils' imaginations. For instance, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson pupils were given the challenge of adding different combinations of creatures, such as spiders and bats, to a witch's cauldron but only on condition that the number of legs in the cauldron added up to 24. Through skilful questioning the teacher ensured that, in tackling this task, pupils developed skills in devising their own ways of setting out their answers. She also helped pupils begin to understand how important it is to use patterns of numbers in helping solve problems.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work reflects the variation in the quality of teaching. There is some marking, particularly in writing in Year 4, that involves pupils in measuring their own achievements and this helps them understand very clearly what they need to do to improve further. However, in other instances, marking is brief and gives little or no guidance to pupils. The quality and presentation of work in pupils' books is, in some instances, poor and reflects low expectations of what pupils ought to achieve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's regular promotion of moral and social values, such as respect and honesty, is an important factor underpinning the pupils' good social development. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions.
 - Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the ways in which the school cares for their children and keeps them safe. The school warmly welcomes all pupils and values them equally. Pupils agree.
 - Pupils are invariably keen to learn and to please their teachers. From an early age, pupils learn how to show respect for one another and the adults in school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and learn how to keep themselves safe.
 - Staff and parents believe that the school manages behaviour well. Typically, pupils get on well with one another. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils appreciate the consistent way in which behaviour is managed and say that 'teachers are fair'. Bullying is extremely rare, but there are systems in place to effectively
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manage such incidents. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, such as that relating to people of different race or background.

- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. On the occasions when behaviour requires improvement it largely comprises inattention and a few instances of low-level disruption because teaching lacks challenge.
- Attendance rates are in line with the national average, and pupils invariably arrive at school on time.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because pupils' rates of progress are too variable and teaching is not consistently good.
 - The school's view of its effectiveness lacks accuracy, rigour and awareness of how pupils' achievement compares with the national picture. Nonetheless, leaders are picking up on weaknesses, and the school development plan provides a clear agenda for improvement. Senior leaders have started to devise their systems to help them monitor their areas of responsibility but these are not yet fully developed.
 - Systems for measuring the progress made by pupils over the course of each year help teachers measure their pupils' progress towards the targets set for them. However, these systems do not record the very small steps that pupils take as they move between National Curriculum levels. This makes it difficult for senior leaders to quickly see trends in progress. Leaders do not currently reinforce their understanding of pupils' achievement and progress by monitoring the quality of work undertaken by pupils in their books.
 - Evaluations of the quality of teaching by senior staff are over generous. This occurs because the different forms used for recording observations do not all focus on the effect that teaching has on pupils' learning. As a result the monitoring of teachers has limited impact on raising pupils' achievement. However, there are good opportunities for all members of staff to develop professionally.
 - Subjects and topics covered are broad and balanced and enriched through a range of well-attended before and after-school activities, many of which provide good opportunities for exercise such as street dance, gymnastics and basketball.
 - The hurried way in which new methods of teaching phonics have been introduced, without ensuring that teachers are fully trained, has meant that teaching it currently requires improvement.
 - A significant strength of the school is its very strong focus on ensuring the well-being of its pupils through its strong systems of care.
 - The money available through the pupil premium is used effectively to ensure equality of opportunity for eligible pupils, by ensuring all have access to trips and events for example. It is clear that the school values all pupils equally but overall inconsistencies in teaching mean that some pupils have better opportunities to learn than others.
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- The school was judged as good in its previous inspection, which explains why the local authority has provided light-touch support.

- **The governance of the school:**

- The governance of the school requires improvement. This is because members of the governing body are over-reliant on information provided by the school and lack the skills required to become independent in holding the school to account. They understand how teachers' performance is managed but are too accepting of information provided for them and do not look closely enough at the links between teaching and pupils' progress. The school is aware of this weakness and its development plan clearly identifies the need to ensure that governors are able to develop a clear strategic overview. Governors are well informed about the day-to-day activities that take place in school and are effective in ensuring that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. However, governors have a fragile understanding of funding arrangements, including the pupil premium funding and its impact.
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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	109527
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	412432

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	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Rowland-Thomas
Headteacher	Lynne Birch
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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