

Heathwood Lower School

Heath Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3AU

Inspection dates 11–12 September 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.

- Good quality teaching enables most pupils, including those with disabilities or who have special educational needs, to make good progress in English and mathematics and to achieve well.
- Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to talk about their learning and to explain their thinking. This has been a key feature in improving attainment in mathematics to an above average level.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Behaviour is good and when any issues do arise they are tackled effectively.
- The school fosters pupils' personal and social skills successfully and engenders high levels of self-confidence and their positive attitudes to learning.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- The headteacher's strong focus on improving teaching and her high expectations for raising pupils' achievement are shared by all staff and governors.
- Good leadership, management and governance ensure the school builds on its strengths and continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress of more able learners is sometimes hampered because work which helps them develop skills at a higher level is not sufficiently planned, and they are not given enough opportunities to work independently.
- There is not yet sufficient outstanding teaching to maximise all pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all teachers teaching at least once. A total of eight lessons were observed, all of which were joint observations carried out with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard individual pupils read and observed lessons on the teaching of reading and letters and the sounds they make (phonics).
- Discussions were held with school leaders, two members of the governing body and a group of pupils. The inspector also had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documentation covering safeguarding, the management of staff performance, records of behaviour and safety, attendance, checks on pupils' attainment and progress and school improvement planning.
- The inspector took account of 76 parental responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average size school which has varying numbers of pupils in each year group. Pupils are taught in five classes: a Reception class, and one class per year group up to year four. Pupils enter Reception in the middle of September each year.
- There is a smaller than average proportion of pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium (which provides extra funding to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from other groups such as children in the care of the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils, or those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average but the proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This is for pupils with language and communication difficulties.
- There is pre-school provision on the school site, but this did not form part of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and further improve pupils' achievement, particularly the more able pupils by
 - making sure that all teachers have a clear view of what pupils of different ability must achieve in their lessons
 - further accelerating the more able pupils' progress in every year by adjusting the curriculum as appropriate and providing greater opportunities for their independent learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children generally start school with skills and abilities at the level expected for their age. There were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the time of the inspection. However, scrutiny of planning, their past work and assessment of the children's progress show that they achieve well due to the good quality of education they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics because they are required to build on previous learning, apply their understanding and are taught well. Pupils' build good writing skills due to the increased focus on extending opportunities for writing in the different subject they study and enabling them to write creatively and at length.
- The percentage of pupils in Year 1 who met the expected standard in the national phonic screening check in 2012 was below average. Results for 2013 show demonstrable improvement because of the effective changes made to the way phonics are taught. Pupils throughout the school read a wide range of books with good competence, confidence and enjoyment.
- For several years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year attainment in mathematics was well above average with boys' attainment was higher than girls. The school has good strategies to ensure that no one falls behind in their learning and there is currently no significant gender variation in pupils' progress or achievement.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress and attainment in English and mathematics is above the level expected for their age. In all years, pupils' positive attitudes to learning assist them to concentrate, always try their best and achieve well.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well in both English and mathematics. Close checks on their progress by staff, who provide a good range of well-designed activities, meet these pupil's academic and social and emotional needs effectively. Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties achieve well due to the expertise the school has built in the attached local authority resourced language and communication provision.
- Pupils with a statement of special educational needs make progress equal to other pupils because of the tailored approaches put in place to support their successful learning. This has resulted in them achieving levels above that of their peers national and school data indicates they are closing the gap to be only a term behind their peers in school.
- Highly effective support enables pupils entitled to the pupil premium to make the same good progress in English and mathematics as their classmates. Their achievement in 2012 was slightly below other pupils in school in reading and writing and very similar in mathematics. Assessment information shows the gap in their achievement closing rapidly over time because teachers' in-depth knowledge of each child makes sure that their learning needs are well met.
- Despite their overall good achievement, the progress made by more able learners is occasionally impeded because teachers do not provide them with sufficient opportunities to work things out for themselves.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is at least good with an increasing amount that is outstanding. This results in pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics. Children learn and develop successfully in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are well taught and benefit from an exciting range of activities.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and reflect the importance teachers place on expecting all pupils to do their best. Lessons move at a good pace, enthuse and engage all pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- In the very best lessons pupils understand what they are expected to achieve and can recognise their own success by self-assessing their work and making any required improvement. Teachers use questioning well to monitor pupils' learning, make adaptations as appropriate and accelerate progress.
- In a highly effective Year 4 lesson observation pupils explored a range of mathematical operations to solve problems and the more able learners challenged each other's thinking throughout. In another lesson observed pupils had written a story and were marking each other's work and giving ideas on how it could be improved.
- Guided reading is a regular and effective feature of the week and all pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of texts at school and at home. Pupils are enabled to use a good range of approaches that assist their skills development. For example, younger pupils link letters to sounds to help them spell out unfamiliar words while older pupils use higher-level skills such as inference.
- The partnership between teachers and the other adults who support learning are excellent. These adults are highly trained and the support they give to individuals and groups is a strength of the school. They are fully included in the planning with teacher and are highly effective at ensuring the work set meets the needs of the pupils. They also support pupils' confidence and self-esteem which results in pupils showing positive attitudes to their work and subjects.
- Teachers mark work accurately and comments are provided to both praise pupils for their good work and show the next steps they need to take in order to improve. Pupils use this information well and make responses to their teacher to highlight any gaps in their understanding. Pupils are supplied with challenging individual targets that support their successful learning.
- Teachers generally plan well, but do not always make sure the success criteria for the lesson are specific to the learning for each ability group. Occasionally, more able learners are not given enough opportunities to work independently and this hampers their rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive views of the school and are proud to belong to its community. Their good attitudes to learning make sure lessons run smoothly and assist their good achievement. Pupils listen attentively and try hard to succeed even when they find tasks difficult.
- Pupils are exceedingly polite and courteous to each other and adults. They consider carefully the feelings of others in the way that they behave most of the time. This positive attitude was exemplified by one of the youngest pupils who approached the inspector during a lesson with; 'excuse me, I am sorry to disturb you but may I please ask you to move your chair so I may

move the piece of paper on the floor?’

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. The behaviour of pupils with specific behavioural difficulties has improved markedly due to the positive and effective support given by the school. Some of the new funding in schools for sporting activities has been used effectively to support pupils’ physical well-being and behaviour at break and lunch times, through their increased participation in a range of games and activities, which are led by the older pupils.
- Pupils are fully involved in the school’s decision-making procedures through the active school council. Pupils look forward to the badges which they receive for a wide range of personal achievements.
- Pupils feel safe in school because discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. They are adamant that although there are minor instances of bullying these are by a very small minority of pupils and are very well dealt with. The school’s approaches foster good relationships and equalities.
- Parents identify strongly that their children enjoy school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now average.
- Opportunities for more able pupils to show greater independence when applying their knowledge are not always provided and this hampers more exemplary learning and behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets high expectations for the staff and pupils. Accurate analysis of each pupil’s progress has led to improvements in both teaching and pupils’ attainment since the previous inspection. Parents hold the school in high regard: one parent wrote to the inspector about of their appreciation of the work the school has done in supporting their child who has a range of learning difficulties.
- The staff, including those with specific management responsibilities, and governors are regularly involved in checking the work of the school and planning priority improvements. Their focus is clearly on raising teaching from good to outstanding. Pupil progress targets are set, which are linked closely to the challenging performance targets set for teachers. Both are carefully checked by leaders and the governing body.
- The senior leadership team and governors closely monitor the work of staff with management responsibilities and make sure that they are developed further through targeted training and as part of the school performance management programme.
- This careful monitoring of pupils’ needs has made sure that the school knows when to involve external agencies to ensure disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including pupils with statements, receive appropriate specialist support, for example from speech and language therapists, educational psychologists or behavioural specialists.
- The school uses the extra funding for planning sports development effectively. It has provided a range of specialist taught provision as well as funding to train pupils as Junior Leaders who organise a range of sporting activities at lunchtime.
- The school makes a positive contribution to the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good relationships with the local religious centres, school and local community contribute to the pupils’ sense of belonging. Pupils enjoy links with several schools that make a

positive contribution to their well-being and help them prepare confidently for the next phase of their education.

- The local authority has given light touch support in recognition of the school's good and improving effectiveness.
- The subjects taught are carefully planned to promote pupils' interests and enjoyment and to make sure they are able to learn successfully. Occasionally, the curriculum is not adjusted sufficiently well to maximise the progress made by more able learners. Pupils build their knowledge and understanding through a wide range of well-planned topics, which are enriched by visits and visitors.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body is very knowledgeable about the work of the school, and because governors receive information about its performance in relation to schools locally and nationally, they are able to ask the headteacher searching and challenging questions. They have attended training to further develop their skills, for example in understanding assessment data. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used and keep close checks on the achievement of pupils who are eligible. They are also aware of how the new sports funding is allocated and what the take up is of lunchtime activities. Governors know from the headteacher's regular reports, as well as from their own visits to school and contact with staff, how effectively the strong focus on improving teaching is raising the achievement of pupils. Governors work closely with the headteacher in evaluating the performance of teachers, in setting targets for improvement and linking salary progression to good or better performance. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

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	109513
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	425347

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	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Shadbolt
Headteacher	Barbara Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
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