

Babraham CofE (VC) Primary School

High Street, Babraham, Cambridge, CB22 3AG

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' attainment is consistently well above average in English and mathematics. They make excellent progress during their time in the school because teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and plan exciting, interesting tasks to engage and motivate them.
- Children in Reception benefit from being with Year 1 pupils. Most develop skills quickly and are well prepared for Key Stage 1. Early writing skills are not as advanced for some because planning does not always link indoor and outdoor activities to develop them.
- All staff teach phonics (linking letters and sounds) exceptionally well and developing reading skills has a high profile. Attainment is high as a result.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding. Pupils feel safe, cared for and unique.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and staff work as an extremely effective team. They identify the right priorities for improvement by regularly checking on teaching and pupils' progress.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and say that the school has gone from strength to strength. A few had concerns about homework.
- Governors are keen to help the school to improve and have much expertise to offer. Their regular visits mean that they know how well the staff and pupils are performing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by five teachers. Two lessons were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher and the other senior leaders.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice it gives to the school.
- There were 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. They represented the views of nearly all of the 60 families with children in school. The inspector took account of these and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, and records of governing body meetings, checks on teaching and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Few pupils live in the village and so most travel from a wide area. The school is oversubscribed, and at least three children apply for each place every year.
- The school grounds, with blue tractor, adventure play equipment and field, are larger than usually found in this size of school.
- There are mixed-age groups in the three classes. In the morning, pupils are grouped into four classes. The Reception-age children are in a class with Year 1 pupils.
- The village has a research campus and the mobility of the workforce means that more pupils than usual join or leave the school during each school year.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. Almost all are fluent in English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is low. In this school, it mostly applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average, but the number of pupils is small.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is an after-school club during term time which is managed independently of the school. It is registered with Ofsted and will be inspected separately.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to sustain pupils' excellent progress, review and update the homework policy to make homework more consistent throughout.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure that lesson planning makes closer links between indoor and outdoor activities to further accelerate children's progress in gaining early writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start school with skills and understanding that are broadly in line with those expected. Relationships and routines develop quickly because of the small numbers and help of Year 1 pupils who share the classroom. Staff are extremely caring and supportive, helping children to play and work together well.
- Children make excellent progress in learning phonics (letters and their sounds), often using skills spontaneously to write a title for their work or accurately spell simple words when writing. The school's records show that children are making rapid progress in developing key skills in all areas of learning, and many exceed the level of attainment expected by the time they leave Reception. For some, attainment in writing is not as well developed as in other areas. Planning does not always provide them with the necessary practice in indoor and outdoor activities.
- The excellent start children make to school is due to the support from adults as they work in groups or independently and the wide range of enjoyable and challenging activities planned for them. The favourable staff ratio to the small number of children ensures that all are prepared well for the next phase of their learning.
- Most pupils make excellent progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because teaching is outstanding. Attainment has been significantly above average at the end of Key Stage 2 for the past two years. All pupils typically reach at least expected levels, and a much higher proportion than average exceed them.
- The small year group size has had an impact on overall attainment by Year 2 but pupils generally make excellent progress from their various starting points.
- High standards are being maintained. School data show that in Year 5 last year, all pupils attained expected levels and a proportion similar to the national average attained above the level expected. This was achieved a year ahead of time. In mathematics in Year 6 last year, a third of the pupils attained a level two years in advance of their age.
- Attainment and progress in reading and writing are high because teachers have high expectations of most pupils and plan interesting tasks to inspire and motivate them. In reading, almost all exceeded national expectations last year. This followed a school focus to raise standards. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 read different chapters of a book and shared the content with others in guided reading sessions, for example. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 recorded their electricity investigation, which was linked to the topic about Ancient Egyptians. All wrote neatly with hardly any spelling or punctuation errors.
- Pupils are making excellent progress in mathematics. Most tasks are challenging and linked to everyday problems that give purpose to pupils' work. They collect data about numbers attending a leisure centre or the length of shadows following a science investigation before creating graphs to show the data more clearly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress in mathematics and in English. They benefit from the outstanding teaching and the expertise of some highly skilled teaching assistants who work closely with individuals or small groups in lessons.

- The school uses the small amount of additional pupil premium funding well to provide individual help for the few pupils known to be eligible, and school records show that this helps to improve their attainment in English and mathematics. Too few pupils were known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment in national tests without identifying them, but they all made outstanding progress in line with their classmates.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching reflects the experience and commitment of teachers to see that pupils of all ages and abilities in the mixed-age classes do as well as they can. Common features include imaginative, effective planning which provides tasks that engage, interest and motivate pupils. In a science lesson, for example, pupils tested materials from an Egyptian tomb to see if they conducted electricity or were insulators.
- Teachers make frequent and accurate checks on pupils' rates of progress in English and mathematics, so any pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and supported. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress because their individual learning needs are recognised in teachers' lesson planning.
- Marking is thorough and gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve punctuation and the content of their written work. Pupils are given time to respond to teachers' comments to show that they understand and have taken note, and this helps them to further improve it.
- Reading is taught exceptionally well throughout the school, and pupils of all ages use their phonic knowledge to read and spell words correctly. Parents and volunteers help promote the love of reading and play their part in helping to raise standards by listening to pupils read in special sessions each week.
- Less-able pupils are supported closely by skilled and conscientious teaching assistants. Teachers plan suitably challenging tasks for them and the more-able pupils. This ensures that pupils of all ages and abilities listen attentively and concentrate well on their work.
- In lessons, there is usually a quiet, industrious atmosphere and pupils work together well. They help one another by sharing ideas and information and constantly trying to do their best.
- In Reception, imaginatively planned activities successfully hold children's interest. All enjoyed designing a house for Goldilocks and decorating it or writing letters in a tray of foam. Planning does not always link skills that children are learning indoors with those outdoors. This means that children do not always have the time or opportunity to learn new skills, particularly writing, as quickly as they could.
- The amount and quality of homework varies from class to class. The school recognises that the homework policy needs to be reviewed to ensure that homework is suitable and relevant for all.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and this contributes strongly to pupils' excellent progress. All join in enthusiastically in the tasks set for them and enjoy the challenges planned for them. Pupils talked excitably about mummifying an apple as part of their Egyptian topic, for example.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that 'there is a kind, friendly atmosphere with everyone caring,

all the time'. They clearly enjoy coming to school, as shown by their consistently above-average attendance.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of different types of bullying, such as name-calling and misuse of mobile phones or emails. They say that bullying is not an issue in the school, a view backed up by school records, but know what to do if they should experience any form of bullying. They are confident that staff will help them.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well and deal with the rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour immediately and effectively. In lessons observed during the inspection, there were no interruptions of any kind because of pupils' determination to listen carefully and do well.
- In Reception, Year 1 pupils set a good example and this helps children to settle in quickly. Their behaviour is excellent for their age and they thoroughly enjoy activities such as shooting numbered penguins with water pistols and jumping up and down a number line drawn on the ground outdoors.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership and management of the new headteacher are appreciated by staff and parents, who agree that the school is 'the best by a long way'. Every member of staff shares the drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher to establish and maintain an outstanding school. All are highly motivated and their enthusiasm is contagious, giving the school an excellent reputation locally.
- All staff are fully involved in evaluating teaching and checking on pupils' progress each half-term. This detailed analysis of pupils' progress ensures that any who are not making expected progress are quickly found and supported. Writing skills by the end of Reception have already been identified as an aspect to improve for some children.
- Staff questionnaires show that all hold positive views. 'I feel part of an enthusiastic team' and 'most rewarding job I have ever had' give a flavour of some of the comments. Staff development has a high profile, with many training events aimed at improving quality and standards.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are outstanding. Parents are pleased how well their children settle into the Reception class with Year 1 pupils.
- Leaders and the governing body make sure that teachers' pay rises and promotion are closely linked to their performance in ensuring pupils' successful learning and progress. National 'Teachers' Standards' are used effectively in judging teaching quality.
- The way all pupils are treated equally by staff reflects the school's strong principles on inclusion and equality, so that no one experiences discrimination. The small size and the friendliness of staff and pupils ensure newcomers are quickly made to feel welcome, so pupils who join partway through the year or in different age groups soon make progress in line with their classmates.
- The curriculum has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Parents and volunteers hear reading weekly and this enhances the promotion of reading throughout. Pupils benefit from the expertise of a sports coach, provided as a result of the new primary sports funding. Staff training is evaluated as part of the provision to make PE sessions more enjoyable and exciting for pupils. Many learn to play a musical instrument, taught by visiting specialist music teachers.

- The broad curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious studies, including world religions such as Judaism, topics about Ancient Egyptians, learning French and strong links with the church and Thailand, where the headteacher taught for many years, give pupils a good understanding of other cultures and faiths. All enjoyed dressing up for the red, white and blue day and this raised a considerable amount for a families' charity.
- The local authority judges this to be a continuously improving school because of the high quality of leadership and management and high standards achieved by pupils. It provides as much support as the school requests. Recently, support has been provided to help implement curriculum changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Periodically, it checks the school's performance to make sure that it continues to improve.
- The many parents who responded to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Every parent who responded, for example, would recommend the school to others. A few had concerns about homework. Those spoken to during the inspection struggled to identify any aspects to improve. 'They love it' and 'nurturing school' were typical comments. Some of the parents questioned wanted more homework and some less.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how effectively the headteacher and staff are working. They know how well pupils' achievement compares to that of similar schools nationally. The governing body has a wide spread of expertise and governors are highly effective in helping the school to improve through their interest, support and by asking searching questions. Each year the performance of the headteacher and all teachers is checked using information about pupils' progress and standards achieved. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. All are appropriately trained, with many having attended training sessions in the past year. Financial resources, including pupil premium funding, are well managed. The governing body has an excellent knowledge of child protection and safeguarding matters, and all current national requirements relating to safeguarding are met.

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	110780
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	429508

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Moore
Headteacher	Mark Verde
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2009
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