

Sheffield Lower School

School Lane, Sheffield, SG17 5XA

Inspection dates 24–25 October 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.

- Pupils make consistently good progress across the school to reach standards that are significantly above average by the end of Year 2 and attainment that is significantly above expectations by the end of Year 4.
- All groups of pupils achieve well, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. An innovative approach involves pupils well in their own learning and makes sure that they are sufficiently challenged.
- The use of new technology in assessing children in the Nursery and Reception makes an outstanding contribution to engaging parents and carers in their children's progress.
- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They say they feel safe, a view supported by parents and carers.
- Senior leaders share an outstanding vision for improving the school based on clear values.
- Outstanding team work among the leadership team means that leaders, managers and governors work together extremely well to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- As a result, the school has been successful in keeping standards significantly above expectations and narrowing gaps in achievement of different groups of pupils.
- The exciting and vibrant curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work and at times teachers do not give pupils enough time to respond to their advice.
- Pupils' work is not presented neatly enough in all subjects and their handwriting is not consistently joined in Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 29 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were seen jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and, together with senior leaders, looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- The inspectors met with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the child and family support worker, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 75 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View. They also spoke with parents and carers and considered two letters.
- The inspectors examined 24 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cindy Ashford

Additional Inspector

Ruth McGill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- The school roll is growing. More classrooms are currently being built.
- There are three classes in each year group except in Year 3, which has two. The school also has a Nursery for part-time children.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for certain groups such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- As the school does not have any Year 6 pupils there are no floor standards to report.
- A children's centre on the school site is managed by the governing body. This is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching outstanding by making sure that:
 - marking more consistently shows pupils how to improve their work and that teachers give them enough time to respond to their advice
 - pupils' work is neatly presented in all subjects, including through developing their joined handwriting style in Key Stage 2.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1, especially in Year 1. Improved arrangements for children as they move from Reception to Year 1 have accelerated their progress.
- The attainment of children when they join the Nursery and Reception classes varies from year to year, but is generally in line with that expected for their age. They achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Activities are imaginative and well planned to develop their early literacy and numeracy skills. A theme of visiting different countries introduced children to a variety of cultures, music, food and artwork.
- All adults work well with children in the Nursery and Reception classes. They ask questions that make them think and use language that will help them to express themselves. This keeps children focused, motivated and engaged. They can concentrate for sustained periods, for example while using construction materials.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 have been significantly above average for several years. The school has done much to close gaps in attainment between boys and girls, especially in promoting boys' reading and writing. A project on finding 'Peter Pan's shadow' was particularly successful. During the inspection all pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoyed a 'pirate day' when they dressed up as pirates and learned pirate skills (such as reading treasure maps and dividing up the treasure).
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium have made accelerated progress and they are now about a term behind the others in English and mathematics. Gaps are narrowing over time, so that Year 4 pupils are now much closer to their peers than they were when they entered Key Stage 2.
- The consistently good progress in Years 3 and 4 means that by the end of Year 4 pupils' attainment is significantly above expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because their needs are identified early and they are given additional support straight away.
- Pupils develop a love of reading as they have many opportunities to enjoy good quality children's literature. Parents and carers support pupils very well in reading at home. Pupils apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to read unfamiliar words. Staffing difficulties at the time of the reading check meant that Year 1 pupils did not do as well as expected, but most of the current Year 1 pupils are on course to reach the required standard. Older pupils read widely, and weekly 'reading buddies' give pupils of different ages the chance to support one another.
- Writing has been improving because pupils are clear about the goals they are working towards. Writing journals help pupils to write at length. The presentation of their work, however, is sometimes untidy and pupils do not routinely join their handwriting in Key Stage 2. School leaders are working with staff to improve this.
- A focus on problem solving and an investigative approach to mathematics has proven successful, with standards rising year on year. Careful questioning helps pupils to explain their thinking.

- More-able pupils are encouraged to select challenging goals each lesson so that they work at the right level and make good progress towards reaching higher levels of attainment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. The school's values are promoted in the classroom, for example in the way pupils are encouraged to cooperate when working on science experiments.
- An innovative approach to teaching is proving successful in helping pupils to play an active role in their learning. They are given goals to achieve by the end of the lesson known as 'steps to success'. Pupils choose for themselves which step is right for them and become increasingly sophisticated at picking an activity that is sufficiently challenging. Teachers keep a close check on their progress, intervening promptly to tackle any misconceptions.
- In the best teaching excellent use of resources inspires pupils and motivates them to do their best. In Year 4, for example, pupils used inspirational landscapes to create descriptions with high quality adjectives. Year 3 pupils reflected on the images they used to improve an electronic presentation about space.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. In the Nursery children were enthralled by their work on Australia as they explored didgeridoos. They enjoyed joining in with their own instruments as they watched a video of an Aborigine playing one. Class routines are very well established and children move between activities purposefully.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from good support by teaching assistants, who are trained well and skilful in teaching individual programmes. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- During the 'pirate day' activities in Key Stage 1 there was a high level of excitement - and that was just the staff! In response to a query it was explained that 'firing a cannon' was not one of the pirate skills that was going to be taught, as this required attendance at a special 'boot camp'. Instead pupils worked out how many pirates could fit on a ship before it sank and practised balancing on one leg on a bouncy pirate ship.
- Books show that pupils make good progress over time. Teachers consistently make clear to them what they are learning and set them learning targets to move them on to the next level of attainment. While there are some good examples of marking showing pupils how to improve aspects of their work, this is not yet consistent. Pupils are not always given the time to respond to teachers' advice.
- The use of an electronic assessment system in the Nursery and Reception classes is an outstanding feature of their work, as it engages parents and carers extremely well. They can see how well their child is doing and add their own 'postcards' to capture achievements at home.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, particularly when they are actively involved. The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well in class and around the school. Where a small number of pupils with identified needs sometimes struggle, their behaviour is effectively

managed by staff.

- The school can point to case studies of pupils whose behaviour has improved considerably as a result of the individual support they have received. The creation of the role of the child and family support worker has strengthened this work.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue. They see the school as a safe place. Parents and carers commented that the school responds sensitively and quickly to any concerns that they may have. Pupils know about different types of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber bullying, and what to do to combat them.
- Pupils have good knowledge of e-safety following completion of a survey devised by the school council. They undertake cycling awareness and 'scooterbility' to keep safe on the roads. They also take part in 'St John's Young First Aiders' training. They enjoy acting as 'reading buddies' to other pupils where they can share their love of books together.
- Members of staff and parents and carers are very positive about pupils' behaviour and safety. It is not yet outstanding because pupils do not always take a pride in their work by presenting it as neatly as they can, and there are times when some pupils become distracted in class.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have an outstanding vision for the school, based on its core values, which seek for all pupils to do their best. This has been clearly communicated to all staff, who share it. Pupils are known as individuals by everybody. This gives the school a 'family feel', even though it is a relatively large school.
- Outstanding team work among the leadership team has helped the school to keep standards significantly above average and improve achievement. Measures to accelerate progress, for example in mathematics and writing, have been successful because staff have all shared responsibility in bringing it about. However, not enough pupils consistently make outstanding progress for leadership to be judged outstanding.
- Leaders and managers at all levels promote the school's values and have high expectations of pupils and themselves. This is evident through the rigorous procedures for managing the performance of staff and the systematic checks of the school's work. Teachers new to the school and new to teaching are supported very well in getting established and understanding the school's policies and procedures.
- High quality training supports staff in improving their practice. There are also many opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles. They understand their responsibilities and have the freedom to show initiative and try out new ideas. In this way the school develops leadership potential well.
- The curriculum is lively and gives pupils memorable experiences. It makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Music is particularly strong, with a number of instrumental groups and a choir being well-supported by pupils. The primary school sport funding is used to employ a full-time physical education and sports coach to teach throughout the school, and to support the leadership of physical education and staff professional development. The school has plans to measure the impact of this work on pupils' health and well-being.

- A very wide range of clubs, visits and visitors enriches pupils' experiences further. For example, gymnastics is taught to a high level. The school has been innovative in its use of the latest technology, such as electronic tablets, and in equipping teachers to use information and communications technology to enhance learning.

- The way the school engages with parents and carers is an outstanding feature of its work, whether through electronic 'learning journeys' in the Early Years Foundation Stage, workshops or regular communications. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View, or who spoke or wrote to inspectors, were extremely positive about all aspects of the school's work.

- The local authority provides light-touch support to the school, which it uses as a model of good practice for other schools.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school and very supportive, having a good knowledge of data and the quality of teaching. They are involved in making sure teachers are set challenging targets to improve their practice, and they know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and tackle any underperformance. They ask challenging questions of senior leaders. They make sure that safeguarding arrangements are met. Their meetings, however, go on for too long, which means they are not as efficient as they could be.

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	109479
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	425344

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Liddiard
Headteacher	Tracey Callender
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2008
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