

# Caldecote VC Lower School

Manor Place, Upper Caldecote, Biggleswade, SG18 9DA

**Inspection dates** 4–5 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Staff provide interesting tasks that motivate pupils to learn.
- Behaviour is good. The school is a happy place where the well-being and safety of pupils and staff are priorities.
- Strong pastoral care and a sense of community are central to the school's work.
- There are effective systems in place to track the progress of every pupil.
- The school makes good use of links with other schools and specialists to extend experiences for pupils and develop the skills of staff.
- Leaders, including governors, make sure the training given to staff meets the needs of the school, improves the quality of teaching and raises achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) varies from class to class.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of lesson time so that pupils have time to use and develop their skills.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to write extensively.
- Leaders do not give staff clear guidance on how to make their teaching outstanding.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed an act of worship and six lessons, of which five were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, school leaders and staff. Discussions were held with representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to pupils during lessons about their work, looked at their books and listened to them read.
- The inspector took account of the 32 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspector analysed responses from 18 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at progress and attendance information, improvement plans, evidence of the monitoring of teaching, and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income, known as the pupil premium, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average as is the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school care. They are managed by the governing body and were included in this inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant leadership and staff changes.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - making sure that lessons are organised to allow pupils enough time to use and develop their key skills
  - making sure that pupils have enough opportunity to write frequently and at length.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - establishing a whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics
  - making sure that staff receive sufficient guidance on how to make their teaching outstanding.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. From lower than expected starting points in reading, writing and mathematics when they start school, they make good progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 4, standards are above those expected for their age.
- In the Reception class, children have good relationships with staff and each other. They share resources and follow instructions well. By the time they enter Year 1, they are confident learners and are ready to build upon the good start they have made in acquiring early reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Pupils do well in reading and read regularly. The school's drive to increase pupils' enjoyment of reading and raise standards is paying off, especially for boys, who say they like the choice of books on offer. Pupils say they enjoy reading books linked to their learning in other subjects.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils write in joined script and for a range of purposes. They make good progress in learning how to write in sentences and using punctuation. Pupils of all ages use stories as a starting point for their writing. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 3 wrote about characters from a novel set during the Second World War.
- In mathematics, pupils often do practical tasks. For example, during the inspection, pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class explored non-standard weights and measured out ingredients to make gingerbread men. In Year 4, pupils used multiplication to solve real-life problems. They explained their work well and more-able pupils demonstrated clearly to others how they got their answers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress towards their personal targets. They do well because of the good level of support they receive which is based upon clear identification of their specific needs.
- The school's information shows that the very small number of pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress in line with their classmates. By the end of Year 4, their level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is close to that of their peers.
- Pupils' positive attitudes aid their good achievement. They are willing to learn and respond well to adults, including visiting specialists and helpers. Pupils are interested in others and show good understanding during religious education lessons. They do well in singing, musical performances and physical education.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Staff work together well and make sure their planning provides continuity for pupils in classes where there is more than one teacher. Relationships and communication between staff and with pupils are good. Staff have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and how they should behave.
- Teachers question skilfully to check pupils' understanding and overcome any misconceptions. They set targets and indicate how to improve when they mark pupils' work. Teachers expect pupils to respond to their marking and to judge for themselves how well they are doing.

- Teachers deliver lessons enthusiastically. They match tasks well to the range of ability in the class so all, including more-able pupils, work at the right levels. Teachers link subjects together in interesting topics to inspire the use of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work is attractively displayed in class books and wall displays.
- Staff encourage a good response from pupils. One pupil commented, 'Teachers make lessons fun.' Teachers use resources well, especially to stimulate writing. For example, work in books showed the use of popular characters from computer games to spur on boys' writing. However, teachers do not always make sure pupils write frequently and at length.
- Teachers make sure that pupils read regularly and make good use of extra adult help. The home and school reading records effectively involve parents in their children's learning. Pupils learn regularly about letters and sounds (phonics) but the quality of teaching varies from class to class because leaders have not established a consistent whole-school approach.
- In the Reception class, staff listen carefully to what children have to say and give them plenty of time to talk. Interesting tasks both indoors and out, encourages imagination and reading and writing. For example, during the inspection a letter from Santa was received with great excitement and children were keen to write their responses.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. They work with pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They know pupils very well and celebrate their successes, helping them to make small steps and understand their learning.
- In the best teaching, teachers move lessons along quickly and pupils know how long they have to complete their work. Pupils make rapid progress because they have plenty of time to use their skills. Sometimes, however, not enough time is allowed for pupils to complete their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils say they are happy at school and feel safe, a view strongly supported by parents. Pupils talk keenly about the things they do at school. They say they enjoy the trips and visitors which enhance their learning. For example, a link with a local sandwich business inspired pupils' interest and prompted one to say, 'I like design and technology because we make sandwiches.'
- Behaviour is good and consistently well managed. Pupils are tolerant of those who find it difficult to behave well. The school's logs show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are few but those that do occur are fully recorded and dealt with stringently. Pupils understand the rules because they help to devise them.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying and know who to speak to if they have a problem. Incidents are rare but are fully followed up. Discussions in lessons and during acts of worship help pupils to understand how to stay safe and deal with any issues that may arise.
- Pupils' good behaviour contributes well to a strong sense of community. They value their friendships and the care they receive from staff. Older pupils look out for younger ones. Children of all ages get on well together when attending the well-run 'Kidz Club', which provides a calm start to the school day and a chance to unwind at the end of it.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibility to help the school and others. Those in Year 4 recognise the need to set a good example. Pupils are proud of their achievements and strive to do well.

They say they like being the 'Star of the Week' or 'Writer of the Week'.

- Pupils are attentive in lessons and listen well. Teachers do not always make the most of pupils' positive attitudes to ensure that they are fully involved; for example by giving them opportunities to express their opinions and points of view.
- Attendance is average. Leaders work well with outside agencies to promote good attendance and help parents to understand the link between attendance and their children's achievement. However, holidays taken in term time affect the school's overall attendance figures.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is committed to improvement. She heads a dedicated staff team who work together towards common aims. A very positive response from questionnaires completed by staff indicates they feel well supported and fully involved.
- Subject leaders have several leadership roles in this small school. They receive suitable training and share expertise with teachers in other schools. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects because they check this in a variety of ways.
- The performance of all staff is checked regularly and targets set to help them improve their work. Lesson observations focus on the school's priorities and staff receive feedback on how well they are doing. However, feedback does not always give clear guidance on how staff can move their teaching to outstanding.
- Leaders use thorough systems to rigorously check the progress of every pupil and identify those who need extra help. In the Reception class, children's work is collated in 'Learning Journeys' which show examples of work collected during their time in the Reception class. As a result, staff clearly see how well children are doing and identify any gaps in learning.
- The pupil premium funding is used to support individual pupils and has a positive impact on raising pupils' self-esteem and academic achievement. The school retains a focus on closing any gaps in performance. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Local authority support is used well to build leadership skills and set challenging targets.
- Strong links with others, including the church, enhance the range of subjects and extend pupils' experiences. Visiting specialists provide opportunities which the school alone could not.
- The primary school sports funding is used to extend staff expertise in the delivery of sports and physical education lessons and increase the range of physical activities available to pupils. Teachers are working alongside sports coaches and this is increasing their knowledge and skills. It is also increasing pupils' confidence, for example, when they are using apparatus. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this funding on pupils' wider performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the school well and keep a close check on how well it is doing. They analyse information about how well pupils are doing and ask questions if pupils are not doing well enough. Governors understand how the pupil premium and school sports funding are used to benefit pupils. They modify their working practices to best meet the needs of the school.

Governors seek parents' views and act upon their findings. For example, changes made to the end of the school day and parking arrangements are as a result of feedback from parents. Governors make good use of expertise in their ranks and undertake training offered by the local authority. They understand the link between good teaching and good achievement and how it relates to teachers' pay. They check the performance of the headteacher and make decisions about staff training. The governing body carries out its responsibilities well and ensures robust safeguarding procedures.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109596
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425349

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Wild
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsay Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 October 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01767 316206
<b>Fax number</b>	01767 313429
<b>Email address</b>	caldecote@cbc.beds.sch.uk

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