

Christopher Reeves CofE VA Lower School

Hinwick Road, Podington, Wellingborough, NN29 7HU

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children get a good start to school life in Reception, where they make good progress.
- Attainment in the end of Key Stage 1 tests is slightly above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. This represents good progress from the pupils' starting point in Year 1.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics are improving.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and are adequately prepared for middle school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and are proud of their school.
- Teaching is good and teachers plan activities that allow different ability groups to make good progress.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and effectively support pupils with their learning.
- Physical exercise and sport are well promoted.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for.
- The headteacher's evaluation of the school is accurate. Development planning is accurately focused on those aspects of the school's work which require improvement.
- Governors actively monitor the work of the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that teaching is good, so achievement is good and improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not use their mathematical skills sufficiently well in other subjects.
- Pupils do not learn from their mistakes as teachers do not give them time to make the necessary corrections to their work.
- Handwriting and spelling are effectively taught in literacy lessons. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations of the way pupils present their work so the quality varies across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, two of them jointly with the headteacher. She also gained other evidence on the quality of teaching by talking to pupils about their work and looking at the work in pupils' books. Together with the headteacher, she listened to a small group of Year 2 pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior teacher, a representative from the local authority and four members of the governing body. The inspector also met with a small group of pupils.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, information on pupils' progress, monitoring files, safeguarding and governor reports.
- The inspector considered the questionnaire returns from 9 members of staff.
- The 56 responses made by parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered along with informal conversations with parents.

Inspection team

Caroline Parry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- Pupils from Year 1 to Year 4 are taught in two mixed-age classes.
- Very few pupils are disadvantaged and so supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of such pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. There were no pupils that had such a statement, or an education, health and care plan, at the time of the inspection.
- In 2012-13, the school experienced unavoidable disruptions to teaching staff which resulted in some classes having more than one teacher during the year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide activities in other subjects so pupils to use and develop their mathematical skills
 - extend the good practice that exists within marking by giving pupils time to correct the mistakes they make in their work so that they make rapid progress
 - have high expectations of pupils written work so that all pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership. She is aware of the strengths of the school and is addressing the areas that require improvement. For example, the actions taken to improve reading have resulted in better achievement. More pupils reached the expected level in the national check on phonics this year. (How letters in words represent different sounds.)
- The advice and support of a mathematics expert has resulted in improved attainment at the end of Year 2, along with more pupils making good progress in the subject. Pupils are also more enthusiastic about their mathematics lessons and talk positively about their work.
- Teaching is frequently monitored using a variety of information. Teachers receive detailed feedback outlining their strengths and weaknesses and these are used to plan training for staff. The headteacher and governing body are aware that greater consistency in teaching is the key to further raising attainment and are taking steps to make this happen. The new staff appointed this year are all very experienced and bring a wide range of skills to strengthen the middle leadership of the school.
- Data on pupils' achievement are analysed frequently. Extra help is then given to those pupils who are falling behind with their learning. The support has been effective as pupils who have received extra help are making good progress. The school has made a secure start on introducing a new assessment system to meet the demands of the new National Curriculum.
- The performance of staff is managed well, and pay rises and promotion are linked appropriately to pupils' performance.
- The sports funding has allowed the school to provide a wide range of sporting activities such as gymnastics, archery and fencing. The pupils say they enjoy these activities and the opportunity to take part in sporting competitions. The number of pupils participating in these activities is high and provision enhances their health and well-being.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Comprehensive and robust policies are in place and rigorously applied.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects along with a programme of values that support pupils' to develop a deeper understanding of values such as perseverance, tolerance, honesty and responsibility. This approach helps to create the calm atmosphere and positive ethos within the school, which make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits are used to enhance learning. Pupils value the opportunities provided to develop their leadership skills. For example, the school council has led a series of campaigns such as 'be healthy' and re-cycling as well as raising money for charity. This approach prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good so that children consistently make good progress. Self-evaluation is accurate.
- During the last academic year, when teaching was disturbed, the headteacher requested the support of the local authority to validate her judgements in relation to the quality of teaching and self-evaluation. They confirmed her judgements and have supported the school with the moderation of Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 assessments.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide a good level of support and challenge. They have recently reviewed the strengths of the governing body and, as a result, made changes to make better uses of their expertise. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses as they are frequent visitors to the school. They visit lessons to gain a picture of learning within the school. Governors know how effectively the sports funding is being used, talk to pupils and check that the school is a safe environment for pupils and staff.
 - The governors have undertaken a range of training in order to carry out their role. They understand

what the school's data tell them about pupils' achievement, the impact of the additional funding provided and how teachers' performance is linked to pay progression.

- Governors track finances well and play an active role in deciding the priorities for the school budget. They make sure that pupil premium funding is effective in raising achievement. They have successfully overseen the introduction of the new National Curriculum, and checked that suitable new arrangements for assessment are being put in place. Governors have made sure that the school promotes positive values, such as tolerance and respect for others. They ensure that the school meets all the safeguarding requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe in school - a view that is shared by most parents. The school provides a range of activities that support pupils to keep themselves safe. Regular safety checks are carried out and staff receive appropriate training to ensure pupils are safe.
- Pupils say that the school is a happy place and that they are 'good' to one another. Pupils who joined the school mid-way through the year told the inspector that they were made welcome by their classmates and soon felt part of the school.
- Pupils say that bullying sometimes occurs but they have faith in their teachers dealing with any incidents. A large majority of the parents who expressed a view agree.
- Attendance is improving and is now above average. Pupils are punctual to school.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They work well together in the classroom and show respect for one another. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn and told the inspector how much they enjoyed their lessons as teachers gave them interesting work, especially in mathematics. Very occasionally a few pupils go off task and talk when they should be working. At such times, disruption to learning is minimal, as pupils quickly respond to their teacher's request to focus on their work.
- Pupils told the inspector that a small minority of pupils did misbehave in lessons last year, a concern shared by a few parents. However, the school put a range of strategies in place which had a positive impact on the behaviour of these pupils. The support for pupils facing a range of challenging circumstances is effective and these pupils are now making good progress.
- Pupils' cultural awareness is widened through their links with a school in Ghana, visits, art and music lessons and through charitable activities throughout the year, some led by the school council.

The quality of teaching is good

- Evidence in pupils' books, assessment data and direct lesson observations carried out by the inspector indicate that teaching is typically good across the school. The new teachers in the school have quickly established a good relationship with pupils and the learning atmosphere is positive.
- Teachers provide a range of activities that interest pupils and, as a result, they are keen to learn. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress through the lesson, adapting the work as necessary.
- Teaching assistants make a valid contribution to the learning of those pupils requiring support. They skilfully adapt activities or provide pupils with extra resources so they make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils enjoy reading and several described it as fun and an activity that makes them happy. Pupils are successfully encouraged to read a wide range of books.

- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or who are falling behind with their work is a strength in teaching. Well planned group or individual learning sessions are provided by teachers and teaching assistants. They are rigorously monitored and, as a result, they have made a major contribution to the good progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils' books are marked thoroughly and they are given clear guidance on how to improve their work either verbally or in writing. Pupils say that these comments help them to produce better work. There are good examples of pupils acting on teachers' advice and this helps their learning to move forward. However, not all teachers make sure that pupils are given enough time to respond to teachers' comments.
- There is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, handwriting and spelling across the school. Teachers take care to provide good examples of handwriting and consistently show pupils how to use their knowledge of phonics to read or spell new words. However, teachers are not always consistent in making sure that pupils always produce the same high standard of handwriting across all subjects.
- Pupils develop their English skills when they are learning about other subjects. However, teachers rarely provide activities which allow them to use and develop their mathematics skills in the same way.

The achievement of pupils is good

- A large majority of children enter the Early Year Foundation Stage with skill and knowledge that are typical for their age. As a result of accurate assessment and good teaching, they make good progress and enter Year 1 with a good level of development.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the threshold in the phonics screening test had been below average. However, the extra help for pupils falling behind and improvements in teaching phonics is having a positive impact and the percentage of pupils reaching the threshold increased in 2014.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been consistently above average in reading and writing, and in mathematics it has been average. In 2014, there was a slight dip in performance due to the disruptions to teaching, but pupils still made good progress from their starting point.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2 and, by the time they reach the end of Year 4, they are well prepared for their next stage in education. The scrutiny of work in pupils' books currently in the school showed good progress especially in writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils are challenged in all subjects. The extension activities provided for more able pupils in Year 4 are especially effective in improving their writing, where pupils are beginning to use a wider range of vocabulary.
- The effective support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs results in them making progress similar to that of their classmates. Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding also make good progress.

The early years provision is good

- Children learn in a calm supportive atmosphere as adults provide them with a great deal of encouragement and praise. As a result, the children are keen to learn and quickly settle to activities.
- Teachers and other adults organise a wide range of activities which interest children. For example, during the week of the inspection they were studying 'Humpty Dumpty' and the inspector observed a small group of children helping an adult to cook eggs. They were developing their language skills by describing the taste and texture of the eggs, as well as using mathematical skills by timing how long it took to cook them. The children also extended their understanding when they visited a local farm to see the chickens. The children were enthusiastic about all of these activities.

- Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour and constantly praise good behaviour. The children behave well when they are learning because they enjoy what they are doing and, as a result, concentrate on their work.
- Teaching is good and the teachers have high expectations of children, so they make good progress. During one observation, children moved from learning the sounds represented by letters to using them to make simple words which they then used in sentences. In another session, children were able to identify shapes such as hexagons and pentagons, giving the number of sides for each.
- The learning environment is safe and children are taught how to be safe in a variety of situations. For example, during a gymnastics lesson, they remembered that they have to bend their legs when jumping off the equipment and only one child at a time could be on the bench.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher is new to the school but she has already identified areas for improvement. Her first action has been to run workshops for parents about phonics so they can support their child more effectively at home.
- The school has effective arrangements when children transfer from nursery into Reception. Parents who expressed a view agree that their child has quickly settled into the school. At the end of Reception, children are ready for the more formal teaching styles used in Key Stage 1.

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	109622
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	448386

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Cameron
Headteacher	Sue McNally
Date of previous school inspection	14 October, 2009
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