

Bedford Road Lower School

Hillgrounds Road, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8QH

Inspection dates 2–3 October 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.

- Leaders, managers and governors have successfully improved the school over time.
- Thorough checks ensure that teaching is at least good in all areas.
- The school's organisation of subjects that they teach is innovative and exciting and contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. All parents, who expressed an opinion, said their children were safe and happy at school, reflecting the outstanding levels of care and safety.
- Teachers use questioning well to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils achieve well in all year groups. They learn skills systematically and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- There is a rising trend in standards at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Children in the early years make a good start, especially in developing their speech and language.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking does not always give pupils sufficient guidance in how to improve their writing or mathematical skills.
- Teachers do not all have the same high expectations of pupils' writing in other subjects other than in their literacy work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 24 lessons or parts of lessons, 10 jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and, together with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, looked closely at samples of pupils' work. They considered work from both the current academic year and from the previous year.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and subject materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families. They considered the information on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with: senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff; the vice- chair of the governing body and another governor; and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 26 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke informally to parents in the playground. They also considered nine online comments from parents.
- The inspectors considered all the staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Tusha Chakraborti	Additional Inspector
Sue Aspland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bedford Road Lower is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 4.
- Current government floor standards do not apply because there are no Year 6 pupils in the school.
- An above average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. Many are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school runs a before-school and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give more precise written feedback to pupils about how to improve their writing and mathematical skills.

- Make sure all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils when producing extended pieces of writing in all their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management is good

- Leaders, managers and governors have been successful in driving improvement, so that standards have continued to rise and teaching to improve since the previous inspection. Attainment has been rising over time at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide extremely effective leadership and clearly communicate their high expectations to all sections of the school community.
- The leadership of the school is outward looking and very alert to seeking out best practice and new ideas which can be adapted to serve the school well. An example is the way the school devoted the first week of term to 'brain awareness'. Pupils found out about the capacity of their brains, how they can learn better and be proud of themselves.
- Vigorous checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress ensure that pupils achieve well. Leaders and managers form an accurate view about the effectiveness of the school's work and what needs to improve further. They use the management of teachers' performance to hold staff fully to account. They set demanding targets for teachers to meet. They only consider pay rises when staff can show how they have contributed to pupils' success.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to close gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils with other pupils. Pupils receive additional individual and small-group support.
- Subject and other leaders, including of special educational needs, have a good understanding of their areas of responsibility and work well to bring about improvement. They keep a close eye on teaching and standards and support staff in improving their work effectively. This ensures that all pupils are treated equally and given every opportunity to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The quality of the curriculum is good. The school's range of themes in subjects is innovative and exciting and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well. The 'stunning starts', 'marvellous middles' and 'fabulous finishes' keep the momentum going and pupils fully engaged. Visits to places of inspiration such as Warwick Castle and the Bedford Borough Boat reinforce pupils' learning. They also benefit from residential visits. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary sports premium is spent effectively on coaching, the teaching of dance and extra clubs. More pupils are taking part in sport, including a greater range of lunchtime activities. This is having a beneficial impact on their health and well-being.
- Parents are very positive about the school's work and the fact that their children enjoy attending. They find staff approachable and feel well informed about how their children are doing.
- The school has not received significant support from the local authority. When leaders identify a need they seek external support from a range of external providers, including the local authority and consultants.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are energetic and far-sighted and reflect well on their effectiveness. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing, both in school and compared with other pupils nationally. They know about the quality of teaching and what the school is doing to reward good teachers and the procedures to deal with any inadequate teaching. They know how the pupil premium and sports premium are being spent and the impact they are having. They visit regularly to find out for themselves how the school is performing and report back to the governing body. Governors provide the right amount of challenge to senior leaders and ensure they have all the skills they need to fulfil their duties well. They make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are enthusiastic about learning and keen to participate in activities. This is particularly apparent in 'Explore and Learn' sessions, for example when pupils were using balloons to make working models of the lungs.
- Pupils treat one another with respect and are friendly to adults. They happily chat about their learning. Pupils enjoy earning coloured stickers, which each represent a different positive attribute of behaviour such as working hard or being polite. They can exchange these for a 'rainbow badge' when they have a full complement and show that their behaviour exceeds expectations in all respects.
- As a result of the school's work with families, attendance has improved over the past year and is now average.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils do not always show a thirst for learning and some pupils find it hard to manage their own behaviour when an adult is not nearby.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe in school. This is supported by all parents who responded on Parent View.
- Pupils in the before-school and after-school clubs enjoy their extended day in a safe and attractive environment, socialising well together under the care of highly skilled adults.
- Pupils know all about keeping safe. They are completely confident that adults will help them with any concerns. Bullying is not an issue. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying and what to do to resist it. They know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils on the eco-committee say their job is to 'keep the school clean and healthy.' They do this very well, making sure all waste paper is recycled and lights are turned off when not needed. The school council is freely elected, promoting the British value of democracy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good across the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They engage well with teaching staff and are keen to learn.
- As a result of teaching that deals with topics in depth, pupils acquire a good knowledge and understanding of what they are learning. For example, in the topic, 'Blood, Guts and all that Gore', Year 4 pupils could describe the use of many different organs of the body, including the pancreas and gall bladder.
- Teaching assistants are trained well and used effectively to support groups and individuals. This means that they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers use questioning well to make pupils go deeper in their learning, and quickly pick up any misunderstandings. They correct these straight away so that pupils are clear in their understanding. They organise lessons well, and use a variety of materials to interest and challenge pupils' thinking.
- Mathematics is taught well. Pupils learn to calculate systematically and have plenty of opportunities to apply their skills in solving real-life problems.

- Children in the early years have good opportunities to sustain their interest in activities and receive effective individual support. Routines are well established so that children can find the resources they need and work efficiently.
- Pupils quickly learn to form sentences correctly. This is because handwriting and literacy skills are taught well. In Year 1, pupils wrote about how we change as we grow, comparing photographs of themselves as babies with how they are now. They formed their letters clearly and remembered to punctuate their sentences accurately with capital letters and full stops.
- Pupils' exercise books from the previous academic year show that teachers mainly have high expectations of pupils. This is reflected both in the amount and good quality of the work they produce. In some classes topic work is particularly impressive. For example, Year 4 pupils were archaeologists for the day at the start of their 'Walk like an Egyptian' topic. They all wrote letters of application to the famous Egyptologist, Howard Carter, to join him on his dig.
- Just occasionally, pupils are not given enough guidance about what is expected when they write extended pieces in their topic books and this means their writing does not fully reflect their potential.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join Reception with skills that are typically low, especially in their speech and language. They frequently speak no English. They make good progress because staff meet their needs well and provide a good range of purposeful activities that develop their early basic skills.
- By the time children enter Year 1 their personal skills and physical development are similar to pupils of the same age, but standards are below average in reading and writing as a result of their low starting points.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. Books from the previous academic year show that pupils achieve well over time and produce a good quantity of work. In 2014, unpublished results show that pupils reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Results have been improving year-on-year, reflecting the impact of changes senior leaders have introduced to drive improvements.
- Pupils also achieve well in Key Stage 2. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment is above expectations in reading and mathematics and meeting expectations in writing. The school's information shows that in 2014 Year 4 pupils made good progress from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 4 in all subjects. Year 3 pupils did similarly well in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing was in line with national expectations.
- In some classes the written feedback pupils receive about their writing is more precise than in others, which means that some pupils are better equipped to improve their writing than others. Similarly, the extent to which comments help pupils make the next steps in their learning in mathematics varies somewhat.
- Reading has improved rapidly because the school makes it a high priority. Pupils benefit from an online reading facility that develops their comprehension skills. Changes to the way phonics is taught (the sounds that letters make) mean teachers have a clear view of the progress of all the pupils in their class.
- Any pupils who are at risk of falling behind are given additional support to catch up. Teachers reinforce phonics skills throughout different subjects and topics. In the 2014 Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils who met the required standard rose considerably on the previous year and is now close to average. Boys did just as well as girls, successfully closing a gap that existed in 2013.
- Standards have risen in mathematics because the school has used its own expertise to coach staff and introduced new resources to support pupils' learning. A focus on basic calculation throughout the school

means that pupils learn new skills in a systematic way.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because they are identified early and given the specific support they need. Staff follow their progress closely and are fully aware of the next steps required to meet challenging targets.
- The many pupils who speak English as an additional language or from minority ethnic communities make good progress because they are supported well from the start. Staff adapt the work to suit them, and make good use of additional adults where necessary to ensure all pupils are fully included in activities.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress. In 2014 the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was very similar for disadvantaged pupils and the others in the school. This closed a gap that was evident in 2013. At that time pupils were one-and-a-half terms behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics, although this was not as great as the national gap with other non-disadvantaged pupils.
- The most able pupils are generally well challenged to achieve their best. Teachers usually plan activities that stretch them throughout lessons. Occasionally, expectations of their extended writing in topic books are not as demanding as they could be.

The early years provision

is good

- Staff plan learning well and organise activities effectively to inspire children's curiosity and interest. This creates a purposeful atmosphere in which all children are stimulated and able to sustain their attention.
- Leaders keep in close touch with feeder nurseries and childminders. This helps children settle quickly when they join Reception. They support parents well in helping their children to become confident learners. Parents are very positive about the way the early years provision supports their children.
- Staff place a good emphasis on developing children's speech and language. They do this partly through the use of role-play. For example, a child sold the inspector pizza and gave him the correct change. Another child picked up a clipboard and role-played being an inspector. This child's judgement was that the provision was good.
- Staff keep rigorous and regular records of pupils' achievements. This means they know what children need to do next to move on in their learning. The early years provision is led and managed well. A strong team of staff work together effectively to help children make good progress so that they are well prepared to move to Year 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	109461
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	448392

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	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lionel Stewart
Headteacher	Lindsay Gould
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
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