

Lancot Lower School

Lancot Drive, Dunstable, LU6 2AP

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Until recently, senior leaders have not done enough to strengthen teaching.
- Too many pupils make slow progress and underachieve because teaching, over time, has been inadequate. Weaknesses in teaching persist.
- Higher ability pupils underachieve because teachers do not understand how to challenge them to do their best work.
- Teachers' knowledge of how to teach mathematics is not good enough to stretch pupils' learning.
- Pupils' books are untidy and they do not take pride in their work.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes do not make enough progress from their starting points as teachers do not understand how to help them learn their best when they choose activities for themselves.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress due to poor leadership and provision over time.
- The local authority has given no help to the school as it was unaware of the school's need to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have taken robust action to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Those eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress from their starting points. There is very little gap between their attainment and that of all pupils nationally.
- Pupils behave responsibly around the school. They treat each other and all adults with care and respect. They are keen to learn.
- Safeguarding procedures are good and as a result pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development due to the strong values promoted by staff and governors.
- The school has made a good start to implementing a new curriculum. Parents are pleased with the impact on their children's enjoyment of school.
- Governors have supported the school through a very difficult move from being a lower school to a primary school. Their good financial management has made this possible.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out without notice.
- Inspectors observed how learning is planned and developed in all classes. Inspectors also carried out a walk around the school to look at how well pupils learn in small groups in particular those who have disabilities and those who have special educational needs.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the governing body, a representative from the local authority, staff, pupils and parents. They examined a wide range of documentation including: safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan, the curriculum plan and teachers' planning. They scrutinised pupils' work from the last school year as well as recent work.
- Forty seven parents responded via Parent View and inspectors received 22 text messages from parents. Inspectors took full account of these parents' views.
- Inspectors received and considered 22 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Jones

Additional Inspector

Mike Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average sized primary school and has slightly more girls than boys.
- Pupils are mostly of White British heritage.
- Fewer pupils are eligible for the pupil premium than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are receiving school support is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through a statement of special educational needs is above average. Currently, no pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school accommodates local authority provision for pupils with BSED (behavioural, social and emotional difficulties). The local authority funds the pupils who attend and the school employs the teacher-in-charge.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after school clubs and these were included in the inspection.
- The school has recently changed its designation from a lower school to a primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure teaching promotes good learning and progress for all groups of pupils in each lesson by ensuring teachers:
 - understand the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils should acquire in each subject
 - keep a close eye on how pupils respond to learning activities and adapt these if pupils are not making the progress they should
 - provide clear explanations to pupils about what they are learning
 - are more ambitious about what all pupils can achieve, especially higher ability pupils, and plan learning activities accordingly
 - explain to teaching assistants precisely how to help pupils with their learning
 - explain precisely what pupils should do to improve their work and give them enough time to make these improvements
 - model good handwriting and show pupils how to record their work neatly and carefully in their exercise books and check that this is done.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by improving teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and curriculum content.
- Improve leadership and management of provision for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs by making sure all staff know and understand what these needs are and precisely how to help pupils make the best possible progress in lessons.
- Improve children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that teachers and early years support staff help children learn well when they are choosing their own activities by:
 - asking questions that help children think about and explain their ideas
 - observing children exploring different activities so they know precisely when to intervene with new ideas or questions to extend learning
 - having meaningful and sustained conversations with children as they play, to develop their vocabulary and understanding of concepts.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by making sure:
 - teaching improves rapidly
 - senior leaders and governors keep a vigilant eye on pupils' learning and progress and take immediate action if this is not good enough
 - all leaders have enough time to carry out their additional responsibilities effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and governors have not paid sufficient attention to raising pupils' achievement and have not been ambitious enough for what pupils can achieve in their lessons. The school's leadership team took its eye off the ball when the school changed its designation, with transition from a lower school to a primary school.
- The headteacher has been robust in challenging inadequate teaching. As a result, there have been significant staffing changes and the headteacher and governors have made the right decision not to give teachers higher salaries. However, despite this firm stance most pupils are not making enough progress in lessons and the work in their books is not good enough.
- School leaders have chosen many of the targets for improvement identified by the inspection team but they are over generous in their view of teaching across the school. As a result they have not recognised the specific weaknesses in teaching, or planned how to address these. The deputy headteacher has started to improve teachers' marking but she has not focussed on improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to make sure all pupils learn their best in every lesson.
- Leadership and management of provision for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs has been inadequate. This has resulted in poor progress for these pupils. The headteacher has recently taken over this responsibility, but has not had enough time to make a difference for these pupils.
- There is a very mixed picture of views from the parents who responded to Parent View and the messages received by inspectors. Some parents and carers are extremely positive and say how well their children get on at school. A significant minority of others are not happy with the school. They say their children do not make enough progress and feel their concerns are not listened to. Most parents who responded are very enthusiastic about the new curriculum the school is beginning to put in place and say their children enjoy the new activities.
- Although the local authority has offered to help the school in its transition from a lower to a primary school, it has not provided adequate support or challenge in recent years. It has monitored pupils' attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 4 from a distance, but was unaware that pupils were underachieving at the school.
- The deputy headteacher has made a good start to implementing the new National Curriculum, and in developing the school's approach to the curriculum and assessment. She is supported well by subject leaders who are enthusiastic and committed to improving pupils' learning. This is at the early stages of development. All staff speak very highly of the support they have been given by the deputy headteacher.
- School leaders have made good use of pupil premium funding because these pupils do as well as all other pupils nationally.
- There is good leadership of the designated local authority provision for pupils with special educational needs. As a result these pupils make good progress from their starting points and their behaviour improves over time. The teacher-in-charge of this provision makes a good contribution to ensuring all pupils in the school behave well.
- The school has used the sport premium funding to good effect and there is high participation in sports clubs. As a result, pupils have improved their skills in a range of sports, including swimming and football.

For example every pupil can swim by the time they leave the school, and a large majority take part in local Saturday morning football tournaments.

- Safeguarding processes and procedures meet requirements and, as a result, pupils are well cared for and safe.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors are highly committed to supporting school improvement and have challenged the headteacher about pupils' progress. However, they have been too preoccupied with managing the change from lower to primary school provision and overseeing the building of new classrooms, and have not followed up their concerns about learning and teaching rigorously enough.
- Governors have a good understanding of performance management. They have supported the headteacher well in managing teachers' performance and, as a result, have implemented the pay policy appropriately.
- Governors monitor the use of the school's budget exceptionally well. As a result, they have managed to save enough money to make sure the school is in a good financial position for its move from a lower to a primary school.
- Governors have given good support to the school's new curriculum and its strong approach to developing pupils' values. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors have monitored the use of pupil premium and sport funding and have made sure school leaders have used this additional funding effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils have become too accustomed to a slow pace in lessons, and do not work hard enough. They lose interest and drift off task too easily.
- Pupils behave responsibly around the school and at lunchtimes because they have great respect for all the adults in the school. They follow directions quickly and without question. They work collaboratively when asked to, and play happily together on the playground and school field.
- The behaviour of pupils in the designated local authority provision is good because it is very well managed by the teacher-in-charge and by support staff. As a result, when these pupils join other classes they behave well. If there is an incidence of bad behaviour, all staff are well trained and handle this appropriately therefore no pupils are put at risk.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying and say this does not happen in their school. Parents have expressed concerns about bullying in the past but any incidents have been dealt with immediately.
- Pupils talk with great enthusiasm and commitment about the school's approach to promoting values. This contributes to their good moral, social and cultural development. Although pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds they learn effectively about life and diversity in modern Britain through curriculum topics and their links with schools in culturally diverse parts of England and Africa.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. There are effective systems in place to make sure this is the case.
- Attendance has improved over the last two years and the school has successfully reduced persistent

absence. This is because the governors and senior leaders have taken a very strong line and do not authorise holidays in school time. They insist on pupils being on time and in school, and good attendance is regularly celebrated. There have been no permanent exclusions and very few fixed term exclusions in the last two years.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because pupils have made insufficient progress. It is clear from the work in pupils' books that teachers do not have high enough expectations when planning work, especially for higher ability pupils, and pupils are consequently destined to underachieve.
- Teachers' low expectations were exemplified during inspectors' observations. In a mathematics lesson, for example, at least half the class only completed one sum in 25 minutes.
- In mathematics, from work scrutiny and lesson observations, it was clear that teachers do not always know why they are teaching a particular skill or how to help pupils understand new concepts. For example, in one lesson pupils were learning a written method of calculation which, in the examples given, was unnecessary because pupils could easily work out the answers in their heads.
- Teachers' planning gives too little consideration to the knowledge and skills to be learnt by the pupils, or the understanding to be gained. This holds back learning and means pupils are not challenged to work hard, apply their learning or think for themselves.
- Teaching assistants do not always help pupils learn better because teachers do not give them clear instructions about how to do this. As a result, although they have positive relationships with pupils, teaching assistants do not ask challenging enough questions to move learning forward.
- Although teachers follow the school's marking approach, their written comments are not specific enough about how pupils should improve their work. Sometimes their handwriting is not legible enough. Also, they do not give pupils enough time to make the recommended changes, or encourage pupils to reflect on how well they are doing.
- Teaching in the designated local authority provision is good. The teacher-in-charge has a good understanding of how to plan learning activities that interest and enthuse pupils as well as teach them the key skills they need for the next stage in their education.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The school's view of pupil achievement across the school is inconsistent and somewhat unreliable. Over the last two years the school's Key Stage 1 outcomes indicate that the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is significantly better than other pupils of their age in reading and writing. However, the evidence of both attainment and progress in pupils' books and in lessons does not reflect this positive view, and clearly shows attainment that is below national expectations and inadequate progress over the last year.
- In Year 1 assessments, the majority of pupils do not reach the expected standard in phonics (the sounds letters make). Although they appear to catch up in Year 2 this indicates inadequacy in the teaching of reading earlier in the children's time at school. The school has very recently introduced a new phonics programme to deal with this, but the impact is not yet evident. Pupils' poor phonic skills were obvious when inspectors read with Year 2 and 3 pupils.

- Higher ability pupils are not achieving as well as they should. This is evident in lessons and in the standards they reach by the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics where attainment for this group of pupils is significantly below national expectations. The school has recently introduced more challenging mathematics activities for Year 5 pupils but it is too soon to see the impact of this.
- Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs do not achieve as well as they should. This is because teachers and teaching assistants do not expect enough of these pupils in lessons and their learning activities are not challenging enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points because the school uses well its additional funding to support their specific learning needs.
- Pupils who attend the designated local authority provision make good progress from their starting points because learning is tailored very carefully to fit the needs of their statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The majority of children start the Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that is similar to or above other children of their age.
- Although more children than average reach a good level of development, this does not reflect the inconsistent pattern of their progress from the start of Nursery to the end of Reception. This is evident in the record of children's learning kept by the school over the last year, and in observations of direct teaching and learning activities that the children choose for themselves.
- When teachers work with small groups or pairs of children they ask good questions which help children to learn new things and develop their skills. However, when children are choosing their own activities, teachers and other adults do not intervene with questions to stimulate thinking and move learning forward. This slows the development of essential skills, knowledge and understanding across all the areas of learning. For example, there was no adult support when a group of Reception class boys used the whiteboard, flicking aimlessly between one computer programme and another and making no progress in their learning.
- Teachers have a reasonably accurate view of children's ability level but they do not use this information well enough to set suitable challenges, especially for the most able and in mathematics. Examples were seen of children using resources which were considerably below their level of understanding, for instance, using a 'one to ten' jigsaw with children who could count to a hundred.
- Most children start the Nursery with good personal and social skills. They are polite to adults they work with, and play and work well together. However, learning behaviour is not good when learning activities are not challenging enough.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Since the new leader took over at the start of last term, teachers' planning has improved as has the teaching of phonics. However, the leader acknowledges there is a lot more to be done to improve children's learning and because of her class teaching commitment and other leadership responsibilities within the school she does not have sufficient time to do this work. The headteacher and governors have recognised this and have plans to resolve the situation.

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	109518
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	448380

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Hughes
Headteacher	Miss Helen Shead
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2010
Telephone number	01582 667956
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