

Studham CofE VC Lower School

Church Road, Studham, Dunstable, LU6 2QD

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher has high expectations and is a highly effective leader. He has established a strong leadership team and together, they ensure high quality teaching and achievement.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Their relationships with adults and each other are excellent.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and work very hard.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well because teaching is consistently at least good and, increasingly, it is outstanding.
- Teachers know pupils very well and set exceptionally high standards for all pupils. They ensure that learning is both interesting and exciting.
- Every child's progress is frequently reviewed, and support provided if their progress is not better than expected. As a result, all pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most-able pupils achieve well.
- Marking frequently provides pupils with precise information about how to improve their work, and they rise to the challenge.
- The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is outstanding. Results in the screening test have been well above average for the last three years.
- In the Reception class and across the school, pupils make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points.
- More children than is usually the case nationally have reached a good level of development by the time they leave Reception; they are well-prepared to join Key Stage 1.
- Pupils reach standards that are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Standards are also higher than those typically found by the end of Year 4.
- The school's values and beliefs are shared with the pupils and these contribute to pupils' excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the school's outcomes, holding leaders and managers at all levels to account. They confidently evaluate the performance of the school through robust scrutiny of the detailed information they receive.
- The school takes full advantage of its partnership with local schools in the area to share expertise and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- Although pupils are very well prepared for the middle school stage of their education, their attainment in writing, and specifically in their spelling, presentation and handwriting, is slightly behind their impressive reading and mathematical skills.
- School leaders, including governors, have worked well to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to maintain its high quality provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Pupils' work was sampled informally in lessons, and the inspector looked at pupils' books in detail to gain evidence about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress over time. The inspector listened to reading by pupils from Years 2 and 4.
- The inspector also reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own data on current pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors, and school staff, including those with management responsibilities. A discussion also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector met with a parent and held informal discussions with parents before school.
- The inspector evaluated the 26 responses of parents to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as responses by parents to the school's own questionnaires. The inspector also took account of the views of nine members of the school's staff through the inspection questionnaires they returned.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a very small, rural school serving the villages of Studham and Whipsnade and a wide area around it. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of white British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is around 10%, which is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is about 8%, which is below the national average.
- Pupils are taught full-time in a Reception class, and in two other mixed-age classes, one class for Years 1 and 2 and the other for Years 3 and 4.
- The school has recently entered into a collaboration arrangement with two other local lower schools and the middle school which most of the pupils move to. Together they form the Priory Partnership for Learning. The schools' governing bodies remain separate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the strategies for raising attainment in writing so that pupils' attainment is consistently at least as high as it is in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring pupils' handwriting and presentation are consistently good or better across all year groups
 - improving spelling so that pupils' writing is more accurate.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is unrelenting in his pursuit of excellence. He is well-supported by very capable teachers and teaching assistants and by a governing body that is both supportive, and challenging.
- Planning for improvement is detailed and sharply focused on the school's key aims. This has led to a significant improvement in reading and mathematics. This is now being followed with concerted action on raising standards in writing, and the school is focussed on bringing this subject up to the same high levels as those found in reading and mathematics.
- The headteacher has very effectively delegated responsibilities so that all staff have a leadership or management role. The staff form a cohesive team and work very well together. As subject coordinators in this small school, they achieve an excellent balance between providing support for colleagues, and regularly checking the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.
- Staff receive high quality training and they feel the school makes every effort to help them to improve their skills constantly. There is a clear link between the performance of teachers and their salary progression. Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are very strong.
- The small size of the school ensures that staff know all pupils and families very well. Leaders have a very clear view of the progress of individual pupils and different groups. Prompt action is taken if it is identified that extra support is necessary to maintain their progress. In this extremely caring and inclusive school all pupils are valued and are able to access all that the school has to offer. As a result, the schools' promotion of equality of opportunity and its commitment to tackling of discrimination are outstanding.
- Strong links with local schools, including the partnership with two other lower schools and the middle school in the area, help to overcome the potential isolation of this small school. These links are used well to enable staff to share their expertise. The partnership has helped the school to begin to refine its approach to assessment to reflect the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
- The revised curriculum is supplemented by a rich variety of sporting clubs and cultural activities, including educational visits and trips. As well as their artistic talents, pupils also develop musical skills through learning instruments, and pupils sing together very well.
- Assemblies help to promote respect for individuals from all walks of life and prepare pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. Consistently well-planned learning experiences support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Consequently, pupils have a strong understanding of tolerance and democracy. The agreed set of values that staff and pupils focus on is embedded in everything it does, and this creates a reflective, diverse and respectful atmosphere across the school.
- Leaders use the pupil premium and primary school sport funding very effectively and both funds are accounted for in considerable detail. The pupil premium has ensured disadvantaged pupils make progress that is as rapid as other pupils. The physical education and sports premium contributes significantly to pupils' personal development by enabling them to join teams, become members of clubs and pursue interests and discover new talents. The additional physical activities and sports that have been made available are very popular and taken up with enthusiasm, and these greatly enrich pupils' experiences and benefit their well-being.
- Safeguarding practices are effective throughout the school. Leaders and managers ensure that there is excellent understanding of the procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Parents' views of the school are extremely positive. They praise the approachability of the staff, the good communications and the family atmosphere that the school provides for their children, who they feel are making very good progress.
- The local authority knows the school well and provides appropriate support to check the accuracy of

teachers' assessments and to moderate the school's judgments about its overall effectiveness. It is confident that the school's leadership will continue to make improvements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is highly effective and plays a strong part in leading the school forward and ensures that it maintains high standards. Governors place high importance on safeguarding and pay close attention to safeguarding matters.
- Governors provide strong support as well as strong challenge, acting to strengthen and maintain the aspects of the school that make it an important part of community life. They visit regularly, speak to pupils and receive regular updates from staff and senior leaders.
- Governors ask questions that hold the school to account for the performance of both staff and pupils in terms of teaching quality and achievement. They have an excellent understanding of information on pupils' progress and use this to check that pupils, including the small number who are disadvantaged and supported with additional funding, are making high levels of progress. They monitor the impact of additional funding for the development of quality sporting opportunities.
- Governors know the strengths of teaching and are familiar with the Teachers' Standards and know how the headteacher uses them to help manage teachers' performance. They have a clear understanding of the need to link teachers' performance and their salary progression. Governors take part in regular training and manage the budget well to ensure financial stability. They make good use of external reviews to ensure that their judgements are accurate.
- Governors play a central role in shaping the long-term plans for the school and have supported and encouraged the recent partnership with three other local schools.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This includes when pupils are at play, during lunch and when moving around inside the school. Parents, staff and pupils say that standards of behaviour are high and have been so over time. Records kept by the school confirm that pupils' behaviour is of a high order.
- From a very early age, pupils behave exceptionally well together. Pupils cooperate well and contribute eagerly; this is a major factor in the excellent progress made in many lessons. They respond very well to the many opportunities planned for them to discuss their ideas with other pupils, either with a partner or in small groups.
- The school promotes positive relationships and tackles discrimination very effectively. As a result, relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are extremely positive.
- Pupils develop outstanding attitudes to learning. Their understanding of what they are learning helps them to develop into especially mature learners. They are exceptionally well-prepared to make the very best of their future education.
- Pupils respond extremely well to the school's excellent promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a very clear sense of what is right and wrong. There is a system of agreed values which staff and pupils put into practice on a daily basis. During the inspection, the children demonstrated many of these values, including being caring and courteous as well as taking responsibility. Older pupils operate equipment in assemblies as well as supporting younger pupils in the playground.
- Very strong links with the local church and impressive worship assemblies ensure pupils' spiritual awareness is provided for very well. During the inspection, the reflective mood created by pupils' singing during the act of worship was of the very highest quality.
- Attendance is above average because pupils want to come to school. They are encouraged to attend regularly and on time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they have no concerns about their safety in school.
- Leaders make sure that safeguarding is a high priority and that entry to the school is secure. All staff are checked for their suitability before they are employed. Governors visit the school regularly to carry out checks of safety.
- Planned activities in lessons and the opportunities to go away from school on trips and visits give pupils excellent experiences and teach them about life in Britain and the diversity of its culture. Consequently, they learn to respect and value these differences and, in turn, expect to be respected for their own individual beliefs and ways of life. The school ensures that this is consistently the case; pupils neither engage in nor suffer from derogatory language in any form.
- Safety extends to ensuring pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including any that might be encountered through internet sites, as well as prejudice-based bullying. Pupils firmly believe that no one should be treated badly because they are different. Pupils are adamant that bullying rarely if ever happens and are confident that if there is something they cannot sort out themselves, then an adult will be on hand to help.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over time has improved. It is now never less than good and is often outstanding, as shown by pupils' outstanding achievement and behaviour.
- Teaching is highly effective in inspiring pupils and ensuring that they learn exceptionally well. Activities are planned thoroughly to ensure that pupils are working at the right level of challenge. In this small school, the most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are all taught according to their needs.
- Teachers are skilled in checking pupils' understanding throughout lessons so they can adapt activities, if necessary, to improve learning. Other adults' support is extremely well-focused and makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning. The use of resources, including new technology, to support learning is first-rate.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are ably supported, mainly in the classroom. Sensitive and well-briefed adults work alongside class teachers to help pupils with specific needs to achieve well. They strike an appropriate balance between supporting the pupils while making sure that they do not become too dependent on adult help.
- The teaching of phonics is outstanding. Pupils decode and read words very well, and have regular opportunities to develop inference and comprehension skills in their reading. Guided reading sessions are very well organised. Pupils talk enthusiastically about favourite authors and the types of books they like.
- Mathematics is taught imaginatively and pupils readily respond to the challenges and areas for investigation presented to them. In the mixed Years 1 and 2 class, pupils became completely absorbed as they used real coins to calculate different ways to give change; this really tested their skills of calculation. The problem-solving activity they were given was made even more exciting as pupils competed with their classmates in a challenge to see which group could come up with the most calculations. In pupils' books there is a good balance of calculations and problem-solving activities, in the course of which pupils demonstrate they are able to apply previously learned mathematical knowledge and skills confidently and accurately.
- Pupils are encouraged to work together and, consequently, are very attentive when listening to what their classmates have to say. This was illustrated when pupils in Years 3 and 4 were discussing the key features to be found in both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Pupils readily asked questions and offered opinions and ideas on the use of headlines, captions, subtitles and use of photographs to maintain the

wide variety of readers' interest.

- Pupils are given regular opportunities to exchange ideas and talk them through, and teachers encourage them to use these opportunities to plan how they intend to write. Although pupils write confidently and fluently, they do not always receive enough encouragement to check that their spellings are accurate. Similarly, teachers could do more to ensure that the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is always consistently good across the school.
- Marking in books provides clear guidance for pupils on what they have done well and what they need to improve further. Pupils regularly use the teachers' comments to challenge themselves as they respond to their teachers' guidance. Pupils are also encouraged to check each other's work and feedback to each other in lessons, and this is a factor in their good and often excellent progress.
- The warm relationships between adults and pupils, combined with well-established classroom routines ensure that lessons proceed smoothly and purposefully. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils are capable of and all pupils, including the most able, are challenged to achieve as much as they can. Pupils enjoy their lessons and always have a very clear understanding of what they should be learning.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children's experiences and skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary from year to year, reflecting the small numbers in each cohort. More recently they have been slightly below those typically found for this age group in aspects of language and communication and numeracy. Children make rapid progress and achieve or exceed a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. This prepares them well for entry to Year 1.
- This very good progress continues in Key Stage 1 so that pupils reach standards that are significantly above average by the end of Year 2. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to build on these excellent achievements and, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment in English and mathematics is much higher than the level that is generally expected for their age.
- Progress across Years 3 and 4 is equally outstanding for the vast majority of pupils who remain in school for the first two years of Key Stage 2. This exceptional progress was reflected in the high quality of learning observed during the inspection, and confirmed by the work in pupils' books. This is further supported by the school's own accurate data on pupils' progress. Pupils' achievement represents significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their reading skills. This starts by teaching younger pupils to read by linking letters to the sounds they make in daily phonics lessons. As a result, pupils throughout the school read exceptionally well and older pupils read fluently and with a good understanding of their texts. The results of the Year 1 national check on pupils' skills in phonics in 2014 were well above average, as they have been for the last three years. For the past two years, all pupils have reached the required standard. Pupils' skills in reading continue to develop, leading to above expected standards when they leave in Year 4.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to write throughout the school and they quickly develop an enjoyment of writing and increasingly use their skills to write for different subjects and purposes. However, progress in writing, while very good, is not as rapid as it is in reading and mathematics because of slight weaknesses in pupils' spelling and handwriting.
- Pupils have very well-developed numeracy skills which they use and apply to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems in real-life situations. Pupils are excited about mathematics and relish the opportunity to compete with each other and meet the challenges presented by their teachers.
- The most-able pupils make at least good, and often outstanding, progress. They are challenged to work hard and consistently do so and achieve their potential for learning.

- The exceptional care provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as the excellent partnerships with specialists and close monitoring of their performance, helps to ensure that these pupils enjoy learning and make at least good progress in reading writing and mathematics across the school.
- Extra support is provided for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils where it is needed. They typically make very good progress from their different starting points and achieve the same good standards in reading, writing and mathematics as others in the school.
- Pupils enjoy excellent experiences in physical education and sport. They participate in the wide range of activities, both competitive and informal, that are funded from the primary school sports initiative.
- The school is fully committed to equality of opportunity and it ensures that each individual pupil's achievement is checked regularly and closely.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children enter Reception with a wide range of skills and abilities and get off to a very good start because adults are quick to establish routines and set high expectations. Warm and positive relationships mean that children settle in very quickly. Parents are happy that their children are exceptionally safe and achieving well.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2013 when they left Reception was below average but this reflected those children's starting points. By 2014, the proportion of children, including disadvantaged and disabled children and those who have special educational needs, achieving a good level of development increased significantly to a level well above the national average, and these children were ready to learn successfully in Year 1.
- The teaching in the early years is always at least good and is often outstanding. The early years leader and her team have a very clear picture of what each child needs because the personalities and abilities of the children are known extremely well. Children are provided with different tasks and activities and which cover all the required areas of learning and encourage children to develop the skill of finding things out for themselves. Children engage intensively in practising the letters and sounds at their level and learn very quickly.
- Adults plan additional and supplementary activities and resources well so that they invariably motivate and engage all learners. For example, during the inspection, the children were learning about owls. A visitor from a bird sanctuary brought three species of owls to the school. This captured the imagination all children, and they went on to read stories about owls avidly, discussing the shape, size and feel of owl feathers as well as making collages of owls.
- Adults assess children's attainment and progress with care, making detailed records for each child, and use the results to plan activities at the right level of difficulty for each child, both indoors and outdoors. These activities promote children's confidence, knowledge and skills very effectively across all areas of early learning.
- Adults' high expectations in regard to behaviour lead to children developing excellent attitudes to learning and a very good capacity to get along with each other and work together well. Children are very well supervised and supported and they learn very effectively how to keep themselves safe. Rigorous systems keep children safe and secure.
- As a result of effective leadership, the provision in the early years runs very smoothly and children thrive.

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	109607
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	448404

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Bailey
Headteacher	Paul Burrett
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2009
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