

Shelton Lower School

Lower Shelton Road, Marston Moretaine, Bedford, MK43 0LS

Inspection dates 2–3 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement. The work pupils are set is sometimes too easy. On these occasions, they do not make as much progress as they should. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Standards in writing in Key Stage 1 have declined since the previous inspection.
- Too few pupils, particularly the most-able pupils, make really rapid progress as they move through the school. Although pupils enter with skills that are typical for their age, by the end of Key Stage 1, standards remain average.
- Despite this being an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection, pupils in Key Stage 2 seldom make better than expected progress in mathematics.
- Despite the opportunities now being given for pupils to practise their writing and mathematics skills in different subjects, this has not yet made a clear difference to raising standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The information on the learning of children in the early years is not checked by leaders sufficiently often or in enough detail to ensure that they make good progress.
- Until recently, governors have not checked rigorously enough on how well pupils are achieving.
- Subject leaders do not analyse pupils' progress information carefully enough to identify where improvements in their subjects are required.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher understands where the school needs to improve. She has already made changes which are improving the quality of teaching. Pupils' progress is also more rigorously checked, and this is beginning to make a difference to their achievement.
- The new governors have a clear understanding of their role. They are systematically checking how well the school is doing and this is helping it to improve.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know how to keep themselves safe on the roads, in the event of fire and when using the internet.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They work together well and readily help each other in lessons. On the playground, pupils of different ages play happily together.
- The school's aims and values, for example 'doing the best you can', play an important part of school life. They have been wholeheartedly adopted by both adults and pupils, and this supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in six lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, a group of pupils and three members of the governing body.
- Informal discussions were held with parents.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to analyse. The inspector took account of the school's own parental questionnaires and the 10 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. As a consequence, the size of some year groups is very small.
- The school is federated with Southill Lower School and the headteacher, who leads both schools, took up post at Shelton Lower School in January 2014. The governing bodies federated in November 2014. There is now one governing body for both schools in the federation.
- The school has experienced two changes of headteacher in the past three years.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start in a part time Nursery class. Most then move on to a full time Reception class in the September of the year in which they have their fifth birthday.
- Pupils move on to their next school at the end of Year 4.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is below average at just over 17%.
- At just over 8%, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that teachers in all areas of the school have consistently high expectations of what pupils, particularly the most-able pupils, can achieve.
- Raise standards in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing better opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in different subjects
 - giving pupils more opportunities to undertake practical, problem-solving work, both in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders develop the skills they need to analyse pupil progress data and use the information to drive improvements in their area of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Subject leaders lack the skills needed to track and improve achievement in their areas of responsibility. They are not always clear about what will make the difference. While they track the progress of pupils in their class, they rely on the headteacher to analyse data for the school as a whole and do not therefore identify whole-school priorities for development.
- The school has not done enough to address the need for pupils to make more rapid progress in mathematics, despite this being a key area for improvement in the last inspection. The opportunities now provided for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other subjects have not yet led to higher standards in writing. This has held back the progress of the most-able pupils.
- In the past, the systems used to appraise teachers' performance have not been effective enough. There has not been sufficient emphasis on ensuring teachers' impact on pupils' achievement are taken into account when decisions are made about their progress through the pay scale. The new headteacher has introduced a much sharper link between teachers' pay and their effectiveness. She has also established higher expectations of the standard of work teachers should accept from the pupils. Teachers are responding well to the challenges she has set them.
- The headteacher has accurately identified how the school needs to improve. She has changed the way subjects are taught and made sure that the classrooms are increasingly interesting and exciting places for pupils to learn. This has ensured that pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Much better use is made of pupil achievement data to check how well pupils are doing and to identify any pupils, or groups of pupils, who are in danger of falling behind so that they can be helped to keep up.
- The curriculum has been revised so that it takes account of the changes introduced nationally and to ensure that pupils are interested in the topics they study, such as 'Walk Like an Egyptian' and 'Pole to Pole' and work hard at them. During the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils attended an 'Egyptian Day' and returned to school full of enthusiasm and excitement about what they had learnt.
- The school works closely with its partner school in the federation. This has provided good opportunities for staff to share expertise and good practice and this is leading to improvements in teaching.
- The new primary sports funding has been used to provide more opportunities for pupils to play with, and compete against, other schools. The school is part of a local sports partnership which organises festivals and competitions. Most pupils take part in these activities, increasing the amount of physical education they receive. The funding has also been used to employ a sports coach. He works alongside teachers to provide high quality coaching for pupils, while helping teachers develop their knowledge and skills for teaching the subject.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. The headteacher has made sure that every eligible pupil receives appropriate help and this is helping them achieve at least as well as their classmates. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well, striving to ensure that no group of pupils achieves less well than any other.
- The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination. It monitors pupils' attendance and behaviour rigorously.
- The school teaches pupils key values very effectively, particularly through its system of highlighting a key 'value for the month'. These values are introduced in assemblies and then reinforced by all staff during lessons. Pupils say they are very important, not just in school but at home and wherever they are. For example, during the inspection, pupils working in the Forest School each had a 'value stone' (a stone with one of the school values written on it) in their pocket so that they could later discuss how they had used the value in their work.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 demonstrated high levels of co-operation while designing and building a shelter.

The school's strong emphasis on co-operation, respect, tolerance and appreciating the way of life of others, supports the pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively and helps to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

- The local authority has given the school minimal support. It has provided a termly visit to support leadership in the school, but has not ensured that the quality of teaching has improved or helped the school address all of the areas for improvement noted in the previous inspection report.

■ The governance of the school:

- A recent review of the previous governing body noted that it was failing to hold leaders accountable for improving the school. As a result, governance is now by way of a single federated governing body across both schools. Current governors are experienced and well-trained. They are ably led by a knowledgeable Chair of Governors who has led improvements in the way governors work. New systems for undertaking the work of committees, based on the successful models from the partner federated school, are now in place.
- Governors receive detailed information from the headteacher about how well pupils are performing and, in particular, how effectively the pupil premium is being used. They ask challenging questions to make sure that all disadvantaged pupils are benefitting from the funding and that it is helping them achieve well. They know that the primary sports funding has provided more opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities with other schools.
- Governors have made sure that the appraisal system has been made more challenging and is linked more closely to how well teachers improve pupils' achievement. It only rewards teachers whose pupils make good progress. Governors know that this is helping to improve the quality of teaching and use school data well to check progress.
- Together with leaders, governors make sure that the school meets the national requirements for safeguarding. All adults are checked for suitability to work with children, and governors make sure that the site is safe and secure at all times.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They work well together in lessons, listening to each other's ideas and sharing equipment. On the playground, pupils of all ages play happily together and older ones keep an eye on the welfare of younger pupils.
- Older pupils readily take on roles of responsibility. They check that everyone is polite and well-behaved while eating their lunch and organise equipment for assemblies. Sports leaders are trained each year to help organise playground activities during the lunch break.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work. They particularly enjoy the topics they study and related visits or themed days. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoyed the Egyptian and Roman days and trips out to look at and study aeroplanes. One pupil said, 'It helps you remember more about what you are learning.'
- In lessons, pupils concentrate well. Even when the work is occasionally too easy for them, they try hard and do not disrupt other pupils.
- The school has worked closely with parents to encourage good attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance has improved and is currently just above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school. The site is

secure and pupils told the inspector that the teachers always make sure they are safe. Playtimes are well supervised by adults.

- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, such as verbal, physical, racist or cyber bullying. They say that there is very little bullying currently in the school. Any incidents are dealt with quickly and sensitively by adults and they feel that there is always someone they could go to with a problem.
- The school keeps a detailed log of any incidents of poor behaviour. Leaders make sure that parents are informed if there is a problem and incidents are revisited to make sure they have been effectively resolved.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection were knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet. They know not to share personal details and told the inspector that it is best to use a nickname rather than their own name. They were also able to advise the inspector that, if your clothing catches fire, you should 'stop, drop and roll'.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. On occasions the whole class will do similar work, which does not challenge the most-able pupils sufficiently. This means that they have to wait to get work which will help them make more rapid progress.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy requires improvement. Pupils' writing skills are supported in literacy lessons, and there are more opportunities for pupils to practise these more in other subjects. However, this way of teaching has only recently been introduced and has not yet had an impact on the overall quality of pupils' writing. These opportunities to write longer pieces of work in Key Stage 1 are beginning to help pupils achieve higher standards but more needs to be done if pupils are to progress as rapidly as they should.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their mathematics skills. While they understand basic mathematics, pupils are not confident when using their knowledge to solve problems or apply their skills and understanding in practical situations.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils are encouraged to read often at home and are heard to read regularly in school. As a result, standards in reading are higher than those in writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave the school.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils understand the school's system for rewarding good behaviour because all teachers use it effectively and consistently. Teachers know their pupils well and build positive relationships, encouraging pupils to try their best. Pupils are learning to make good use of the helpful resources that teachers provide in and around the classrooms, creating a lively interesting place to work.
- Additional adults in the classroom work well alongside the teachers. Teachers brief them well so that they know what is expected of them in supporting pupils' learning effectively. Adults are sensitive to pupils' specific needs and a caring atmosphere is evident throughout the school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of this sensitive and timely support.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively in lessons and in small groups by additional adults who carefully follow the teachers' guidance. Their progress in each session is carefully recorded and reported regularly to the class teacher.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils start in Key Stage 1 with skills and levels of development that are average for their age. They make steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but standards remain average by the end of Year 2. Pupils attain much higher standards in reading and mathematics than in writing. In 2014, no pupils attained a high level 3 in writing.
- In Key Stage 2, while pupils make up some of the lost ground in writing, they make no better than expected progress in mathematics. This means that at the end of Year 4, pupils are working above the level expected for their age in reading, but at the appropriate level for their age in writing and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils make variable progress. Although they achieve well in some subjects, they do not attain the high levels they are capable of in others. This is particularly so in writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- The results of the latest national screening check on how well Year 1 pupils understand phonics (the sounds letters represent) were below average. However, there was an improvement on the previous year. Since September, the school has changed the way it teaches phonics and pupils are currently progressing at a much more rapid rate. They are developing secure skills in reading and writing unfamiliar words. For example, a Year 1 pupil sounded out the words he needed when writing a story about Mog the cat. Another Year 1 pupil confidently read 'aeroplane' and 'boulder' and managed 'wrecked' with some help.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school. A few pupils make even better progress, narrowing the gap between their attainment in English and mathematics and that of their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early and appropriate help provided for them. The school makes good use of external specialists to help them provide for pupils with specific needs.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Although there are some slight variations from year to year, children generally start school with skills typical for their age. They progress steadily through the early years classes, but their skills are still typical for their age when they leave. This is because, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what children can achieve. Activities are varied and interesting, but do not always have the level of challenge that would help children, especially those who are more-able, make even better progress.
- With skills typical for their age by the end of the Reception class, children are adequately prepared for their move to Key Stage 1. Some children however, especially the most-able, have not developed the more advanced skills of which they are capable.
- The Early Years leader knows the children in her class well and rigorously records their achievements. However, there is a less clear overview of the whole Early Years Foundation Stage and how progress data and observations can identify where faster progress is possible.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception enjoy coming to school and behave well. They benefit from caring adults who provide a calm, purposeful atmosphere for them to learn in.
- Children are encouraged to be independent and they respond well. For example, they enthusiastically tackle the planned 'challenges' in any order they choose, and make sure that they complete them all before the week is finished. Bright stickers are collected as a reward for each success.
- Staff are well-trained and make sure that the early years classrooms are safe and welcoming. Useful guidance for parents and photographs of their children's achievements help parents feel involved in their children's learning.

- Recent improvements to the way phonics are taught and the way activities are organised have resulted in children making more progress in early reading and writing skills since September.

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	109471
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	448393

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

Type of school	Lower
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Hubbard
Headteacher	Mrs Franziska Murray
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2009
Telephone number	01234 768269
Fax number	None
Email address	office@sheltonlowerschool.co.uk

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