

Wilden CofE VA Lower School

High Street, Wilden, Bedford, MK44 2PB

Inspection dates 10–11 December 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.

- The school is well-led and managed. The staff and governors are ambitious for the school and plans for the future are clearly focused on raising achievement and improving teaching.
- Teaching is good overall and all groups of pupils make good progress, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average overall. It is also above the levels usually expected in reading, writing and mathematics when pupils leave at the end of Year 4.
- The curriculum is well-planned and incorporates all the changes to the new National Curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for through a wide range of activities, including assemblies and educational visits.
- Pupils read every day and there is a culture of reading across the school. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is particularly strong and pupils use their phonic skills well in reading unfamiliar words.
- Pupils are well-prepared to move on to the middle school because they have well-developed social skills and high levels of literacy.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around school.
- Relationships are good. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and that there is little bullying.
- The early years provision is good. Children enjoy the well-planned activities, which develop their skills and understanding very effectively. They are well prepared for their move to Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics, teachers do not consistently check during lessons whether all groups of pupils, including the most able, are making rapid progress and so provide further challenge or support as needed.
- At times, teachers' explanations of what pupils, including the least-able, are to learn are unclear.
- Teachers do not consistently give clear 'next step' comments in their marking to show how pupils can improve their work, or set aside time for pupils to act upon the advice they are given.
- There are too few opportunities used to promote and extend children's early writing in the Reception class. Teachers do not always guide the children's writing sufficiently.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. She also spoke to parents informally as they delivered their children to school in the morning.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan; the school's checks on its own performance; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; documentation on behaviour and safeguarding; the school website; information on attendance; work in pupils' books and displays of pupils' work around the school.
- The inspector observed learning in six lessons and part-lessons all jointly with the headteacher. She also observed behaviour in lessons, in assembly and during break-times. The inspector listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 4.
- Responses from 16 parents who completed the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website, a letter from a parent and 12 responses to the Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Lindsay Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This rural lower school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has a full-time Reception class and two further mixed age classes.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- One in 17 pupils is disabled or has special educational needs, which is well below the national average. No pupil had an education, care and health plan.
- At 14%, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Over half of the governing body are new to governance and were appointed in the last 18 months. An established Key Stage 1 teacher has taken over the role of early years leader and special needs coordinator within the last twelve months.
- Wilden pre-school meets in the school building and was inspected separately in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers regularly check that all groups of pupils, particularly the most-able pupils and those in the mixed-age class, are fully supported and appropriately challenged in mathematics lessons so that they make rapid gains in their learning
 - teachers' explanations of lesson activities, particularly to the least-able pupils, are always clear enough for them to understand
 - teachers' marking contains clear 'next steps' guidance showing how pupils can improve their work
 - teachers provide time for pupils to act upon the advice they have been given in marking.
- Raise achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring teachers provide pupils with better guidance on how to develop their writing and give them more opportunities to do so.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well-led by the effective headteacher, the senior leader and governors. The whole staff team work closely together in this small school and morale is high, creating a positive ethos for learning and good behaviour. All staff are committed to continually improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the right priorities to improve teaching even further and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils.
- Leaders' effective use of the school's performance management system enables them to offer appropriate levels of support, challenge and training for staff. Leaders' regular lesson observations, their scrutiny of pupils' books and the information they collect on pupils' progress, mean they are able to keep a close check on the quality of teaching. Lesson observations by the inspector fully confirm the accuracy of the headteacher's judgements of teaching. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and know that there is a clear link between good performance and salary progression.
- Middle leadership is effective. Although some teachers are new to their roles, they have already identified and addressed aspects for improvement in their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders support their colleagues effectively, attend appropriate training and liaise closely with their cluster of schools to keep up to date with new initiatives.
- The progress of individual pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is regularly checked and parents are kept well-informed about how well their children are doing. The staff ensure that the individual needs of all pupils are carefully met. They do not tolerate discrimination of any kind, ensuring that all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed and to take part in all school activities.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' achievement. The requirements of the new National Curriculum have been incorporated into the school's teaching programmes and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced in all subjects within the termly topics. Pupils are also given many opportunities to reflect on their everyday experiences and to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.
- The additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used well to provide additional individual and small group support, and also to fund the part-time appointment of a parent support advisor.
- The school has used the primary sports funding to provide additional swimming lessons and to subscribe to the Sandy Upper School sports partnership. This is enabling pupils to participate more frequently in inter-school sports events and competitions. A sports instructor provides specialist coaching in physical education lessons and extra-curricular clubs. These initiatives have had a positive impact on pupils' well-being and their understanding of the importance of a healthy life-style.
- The school works hard to foster good relationships with parents. Communication is good; the website is up to date and provides valuable information. Parents are very positive about the accessibility of the teachers. The headteacher meets and greets pupils every morning on the school playground and there is good liaison between parents and teachers.
- Pupils are taught about British values, such as tolerance and fairness, and to recognise the importance of showing respect for different faiths, through their religious education lessons and assemblies. This, together with the wide range of additional activities, including music and sport, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and helps prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding systems are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Procedures to follow up absence are robust. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.

- The local authority has provided effective support and advice to help the school to continue to improve. They recognise that this good school is able to direct its own improvement but still ensures leaders are kept informed of new initiatives and training opportunities within the locality.

■ The governance of the school:

- Many governors are new to their role but they are committed and work well with existing members of the governing body to lead the school. They have a good day-to-day knowledge of developments in the school because they make regular informal visits to meet staff and also make more formal focused visits whose outcomes are reported back to the governing body. Governors receive detailed reports from the headteacher about the quality of teaching and pupil achievement and governors know how performance management arrangements work. For example, they know what steps are taken to reward and support effective teachers. Although they bring a wide range of skills and experiences to the governing body, they recognise their inexperience in governance and have undertaken a range of training to ensure they are sufficiently rigorous. They have a developing understanding of the school data and use this knowledge to hold the headteacher to account. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and how it compares to other schools nationally. Governors have an accurate view of what it needs to do to improve further. Finances are well-managed and governors check that the additional pupil premium funding is being used to improve pupils' achievement. They monitor the use of the primary sports funding to ensure it is helping to improve pupils' fitness. Designated governors have had additional training for safeguarding, special needs and safer recruitment, and ensure all statutory requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has a positive, welcoming ethos. Pupils are thoughtful and caring and work and play well together. They are very polite and helpful, and their conduct is often exemplary.
- The school focuses on a different value each month through assemblies, class discussions and 'circle time'. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, building a strong sense of respect and consideration for others, both in school and in the wider community.
- All the parents who spoke to the inspector, as well as those who completed the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, agree that the school makes sure pupils behave well. The vast majority of parents say that their children are happy at school.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector insisted that behaviour is typically good in lessons and around school. The older pupils are trained as play-leaders and support team games and active play at playtimes. They willingly take on the responsibility for distributing and collecting the small play apparatus when this is in use.
- Pupils have a good attitude to their learning. They like coming to school and particularly enjoy the school's creative topic work. In lessons they respond instantly to teacher's instructions. Work in books is neatly presented.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- While there are occasional small falling-outs, pupils insist that bullying almost never happens. They insist that, if any friendship issues do occur, they can talk to an adult in school who will listen and deal with the problem quickly. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed their children are well looked after and feel safe in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding how to keep themselves safe and avoid unnecessary risk. They learn about the importance of road safety as they regularly walk to the village hall for some of their physical

education lessons. Older pupils regularly take part in 'bikeability' training.

- As a result of the well-planned lessons dealing with internet-related themes, and specific events such as the recent anti-bullying week, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. The school's own records and work in pupils' books from this year and last year show that pupils make good progress in their understanding and knowledge over time.
- Teachers' effective classroom management skills and high expectations mean that pupils are enthusiastic about learning and work hard. They plan interesting activities and homework tasks that are linked well to the cross curricular themes they cover in topic work.
- Reading is taught very effectively. Pupils are encouraged to read extensively and there is a culture of reading across the school. Pupils from Year 1 and Year 4 read fluently and expressively to the inspector and used their phonic knowledge accurately to read unfamiliar and longer words. Older pupils read a wide range of books and were able to name their favourite authors. All pupils expressed a love of reading.
- Writing is taught well in most classes and there are many opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects. The visit of an author to the school inspired some pupils to write their own books. Pupils' spelling is good. They successfully apply their phonic knowledge to help them spell unfamiliar words, and teachers emphasise the importance of pupils carefully planning and editing their work. In a Year 3 and 4 literacy lesson, pupils enjoyed using thesauruses and were encouraged to use exciting vocabulary. Pupils are taught correct letter formation and pencil grip from the early years and many pupils have developed neat joined handwriting. However, children in the early years are not always given enough guidance on how to fully develop their writing.
- In mathematics, the most-able pupils are sometimes taught in smaller groups to provide further challenge. This enables these pupils to tackle more demanding work, which speeds up their progress in mathematics. However, when working within the whole class there are occasions when activities lack challenge for the most able. Teachers' explanations of what particular activities will involve are not always clear enough for other groups of pupils of lesser ability.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and use questioning well. They are well-deployed and play a key role in supporting individuals and small groups in their learning. Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils is effective, and this is one of the reasons why these pupils make good progress in line with their classmates.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to question pupils in order to deepen their thinking and judge the progress they are making. However, in mathematics they do not always check often enough during lessons whether all groups of pupils in the mixed-age classes are making rapid progress in their learning. This means that sometimes pupils are not given extra support or additional work to enable them to make greater progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give praise, but pupils are not always made aware of how they can improve their work. Not all teachers give pupils enough time to respond to their marking and learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the previous inspection, Key Stage 1 results have been above the national average across all subjects. In 2014 a higher proportion than the national average reached the higher level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across Key Stage 1.
- By the end of Year 4, pupils are confident, have well-developed social skills and are well-prepared for their move to the middle school. Their good progress continues in reading and writing across Key Stage 2 and the most-able pupils develop high levels of literacy. In mathematics, all pupils make expected progress but, in the case of older pupils, the most able are not always sufficiently challenged and their attainment is not as high as it is in reading and writing.
- The school's results in the national phonics screening check in Year 1 have improved and were above the national average in 2014. The school made the teaching of phonics a priority during the last academic year. It is now a strength of the school and has had a positive impact on reading and writing in all year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well from their varying starting points. This is because the staff have a clear awareness of their exact needs and tailor the work to enable pupils to achieve, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school uses the pupil premium well to improve opportunities for disadvantaged pupils so that their progress can improve. The standards reached by these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, both in the Year 2 assessments and by the end of Year 4, are at least in line with their class mates. In many cases, disadvantaged pupils outperform other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age, although their skills in communication, literacy and mathematics are lower than in other areas of their learning. They settle quickly because of the calm and welcoming environment and established daily routines.
- Teaching is good. Children benefit from activities that are generally well-planned and purposeful. These engage the children and they are keen to learn. Staff ask searching questions to move their thinking forward and to promote their use of language. Consequently most groups of children make progress that is at least in line with what is expected and sometimes better, especially in communication and language. They are well-prepared to move into Year 1.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Children co-operate well with each other, willingly share equipment and happily wait to take turns.
- The teaching of phonics is particularly strong in the early years and children are confident at building and writing individual words in these sessions. However, there is not always enough support provided to extend children's early writing and teachers do not always offer children enough guidance on how to develop what they have written. When pupils enter Year 1, writing is therefore a weaker aspect of their overall development.
- Relationships with parents are strong. They are encouraged to share information about their children's learning and achievements at home. Information to support home learning is also regularly posted on the school learning platform.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. The new leader has identified priorities for development and introduced new initiatives such as forest schools to support learning. She regularly liaises with other early years providers to assist her professional development and to validate the accuracy of her teacher assessments.

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	109627
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	448395

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

Type of school	Lower
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Parkin
Headteacher	Vanessa Young
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
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