

Springfield Lower School

Orchard Street, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7LJ

Inspection dates 10–11 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders have not used the additional pupil premium funding well enough to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils receive the support that they need to make consistently good progress.
- Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are not closing fast enough in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching does not always help pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, to achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils do not always act on their teachers' guidance and advice to improve their work and address any errors and misconceptions.
- Some subject leaders do not always check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement well enough.
- Governors do not have a sufficiently good understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to challenge school leaders to secure further improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and other leaders know what needs improving. They have secured the full backing of all staff to drive forward improvements.
- Leaders are providing good quality training for staff. Early indications are that these strategies are improving both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement at a good rate.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs as well as those for whom English is an additional language are well supported to make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They respect each other and adults alike. Pupils and their parents confirm that they feel safe in school and that they are well cared for.
- The curriculum offers pupils many enrichment opportunities including an exchange visit with an overseas school. They are given a wide range of ways to develop their skills to live as responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- The early years provision is well led and teaching is good. As a result, children get off to a good start and are well prepared for entry into Year 1.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons. They also observed groups of pupils being taught early reading skills and others receiving support in small groups. Some of these observations were shared with the headteacher. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons, looked closely at their books and listened to them reading.
- Inspectors met two groups of pupils, and spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, including the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, as well as with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school. They examined several documents concerning pupils' achievement and progress, development plans and information about teachers' performance. They also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Minutes of governing body meetings were considered.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. They considered the 41 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- On the first day of the inspection the normal Key Stage 2 timetable was not taught as pupils practised and then gave their end of term performance to other pupils and to parents.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This lower school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White ethnic backgrounds with the remainder coming from a range of minority ethnic groups, the biggest group being of Indian heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much larger than found nationally.
- Almost one in three pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care). This proportion of pupils is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is about one in 11. This proportion is below average.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises three Reception classes which children attend full time.
- At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are taught in mixed aged classes.
- The school works in partnership with nursery schools, other lower schools and middle schools.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a large turnover of staff. The headteacher took up her post in April 2014. Other leaders, including for the early years, Key Stage 1, numeracy and the special educational needs coordinator, took up their posts within the last year.
- The school received the Primary Languages Classroom Award in 2012 for its work on the teaching of Italian. In October 2013, Ofsted exemplified the school's work in its publication 'Good practice resource - languages at the heart of the curriculum'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make consistently good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - disadvantaged pupils are always given well-targeted individual support to achieve well
 - all pupils, especially the most able, do work which challenges them to reach the levels of which they are capable
 - pupils always act on their teachers' guidance and advice to improve their work and address any errors and misconceptions.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enabling leaders to use information about pupils' progress to identify appropriate support for disadvantaged pupils, so that attainment gaps close quickly
 - ensuring that all leaders are trained and given opportunities to check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility
 - increasing governors' understanding of pupils' performance data and the quality of teaching so they can challenge underperformance more effectively.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively enough to enhance pupils' learning and to help them catch up with their class-mates. This is because the data about these pupils' progress are not sufficiently analysed to enable leaders to plan programmes of support that meet individual needs.
- Some subject leaders are not yet fully trained or given sufficient opportunities to check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility. All such leaders, however, are passionate and have recently shared many ideas with their colleagues on how to improve the quality of teaching and make learning exciting. Inspection evidence shows that this is beginning to have a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders endeavour to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed and to participate fully in school life. There is no evidence of discrimination. However, the school is not yet fully effective in ensuring that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, always achieve as well as they might.
- The new headteacher has a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. Together with other leaders she is driving forward improvements in the quality of teaching through a good programme of training and through strong systems of appraisal. Every teacher has a personal improvement plan clearly aimed at increasing pupils' achievement. High expectations of behaviour ensure that the school community is harmonious. With this positive ethos and culture, teachers and pupils are now flourishing.
- Leaders and teachers benefit from working with other local schools in implementing the new National Curriculum and in working together to ensure the accuracy of their assessments of the quality of pupils' work. Two teachers are designated by the local authority as lead teachers and so support colleagues in local schools. The headteacher is invited to make presentations across the country on the school's work on teaching modern foreign languages in primary schools.
- The themed cross-curricular topics engage pupils' interest well. The many visits and visitors to the school enrich learning and help pupils put their learning in context, such as a recent visit to a farm to help pupils understand where our food comes from. The curriculum contributes well to developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. For instance, religious festivals from a range of faiths are celebrated and pupils visit places of worship. From Reception onwards children learn other languages such as Italian and Year 4 pupils go on a five day exchange visit to a partner school in Italy. Pupils learn to empathise, such as by writing a letter home from the trenches during the First World War. They regularly discuss current affairs and democratically elect class representatives for the school council. With these and other opportunities pupils broaden their experiences and understanding of life in Britain and the wider world.
- The primary sports premium is used well to provide specialist teachers to work with pupils and train staff. More opportunities for physical activities have been created, such as a badminton club and ballroom dancing. A 'Change for Life' club is helping targeted pupils to adopt a healthier lifestyle. As a result, more pupils are increasing their physical fitness, health and well-being.
- The local authority is providing good support to the new headteacher and is helping her and governors to drive forward improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are based on accurate record keeping. Staff are well trained and know what to do if any concerns arise.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have begun to undertake training as they identified the need to improve their effectiveness.
- Governors do not yet fully understand school performance data so are unable to ask sufficiently challenging questions of the leadership about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors do not check the impact of the spending of the pupil premium well enough. They do however visit the school to talk to pupils and staff and to check on pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Governors make sure that teachers whose work requires improvement receive good support to improve and they want only good teachers to be rewarded. They delegate responsibility, however, to the headteacher to make decisions on salary increases.
- The governors' appraisal targets for the new headteacher are clearly focused on improving all aspects of the school's work. The appraisal policy for all staff is now centred on improving the quality of teaching, based on the Teaching Standards, and on increasing rates of pupils' progress.
- Governors ensure the school is a safe environment for all users and that statutory requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all races, religions and cultures get on well together. Through the 'value of the month' and the curriculum they learn to respect all people and celebrate difference. Racial incidents are virtually non-existent in the school.
- Pupils enjoy school and they and their parents, many of whom are former pupils, highlight the strong sense of community, where all are valued. Pupils arrive punctually each day and attendance has risen to above the national average for primary schools. No pupils have been excluded for years.
- Pupils welcome the opportunities to contribute to the school community. They carry out various tasks as prefects and school councillors and older pupils read with younger ones. Playground friends ensure that no-one is left without someone to play with.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and try their best. They support each other well when working in groups. Occasionally, when the work set is not stimulating enough there is some low level disruption. As teachers consistently apply the school's rewards and sanctions processes any disruptions are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school's site is secure and all staff are trained on safeguarding procedures. Risk assessments are carried out to ensure pupils are safe both at school and on visits. Staff and visitors to the school are appropriately vetted.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying but they say it is rare. They are confident that staff look after them well and deal with any concerns efficiently.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They are also aware of how to keep safe in various situations through learning about the safe use of the internet, road and rail dangers as well as 'stranger danger'.
- Provision for pupils' safety and safeguarding is good. It is not outstanding as staff do not always systematically analyse incident logs, such as for accidents, to determine if there are any emerging patterns that need addressing.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as not all groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make good progress to achieve well in literacy, reading and mathematics.

- The pupil premium funding is not used well enough to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils receive support that is sharply focused to meet their learning needs. They therefore do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics to help them catch up with their classmates.
- Sometimes the work given to pupils is too easy. They are not always challenged enough to deepen their understanding. Consequently, not all pupils, especially the most able, always achieve the best they can.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and mostly give them helpful feedback on how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Pupils do not always respond to their teachers' guidance by improving their work and addressing any errors and misconceptions. This slows their progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that classrooms are welcoming and vibrant with plentiful displays to support learning and celebrate success. In some lessons, well-planned activities capture the interest of pupils. As a result, pupils are motivated and keenly engage in their learning activities. They try their best and achieve well.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sound they make) is improving as all staff received good quality training at the start of this term. This is ensuring that early reading is being well taught. Reading and comprehension activities now take place daily across the year groups and home reading is actively encouraged. Those having difficulties are given additional support. This is helping pupils to make faster progress in their reading and comprehension skills.
- Pupils are given a good range of writing opportunities across the subjects. They write for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. They are given individual targets for improvement and this year teachers have made it a priority to help pupils develop further their grammar and punctuation. This is helping to improve the quality of their writing and rates of progress are increasing.
- In September the school revised its methods of teaching mathematics. Following extensive training for teachers and purchases of many resources, lessons now involve pupils having the opportunities to use a range of apparatus to help them investigate and solve real life mathematical problems. Inspectors observed pupils working for long periods of sustained concentration as they were highly motivated. More pupils are therefore making good gains in their mathematical skills as they understand how mathematics is used in many aspects of daily life.
- Teaching assistants give effective group and individual support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs as well as those for whom English is an additional language. As a result they learn well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Given pupils' starting points in Year 1, overall achievement requires improvement because not all groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make consistently good progress.
- In the 2013 and 2014 Year 1 phonics screening, a well-below average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard. Inspection evidence shows that because of the improvements in the quality of teaching phonics a much higher proportion of current Year 1 pupils are on track to reach the expected standard.
- In the Year 2 national tests and assessments in 2014, the gaps in standards attained by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally increased markedly from the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap was largest in reading. In all three subjects, pupils were behind both other pupils in the school and, to a lesser extent, other pupils nationally. School data show that disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2 do not always achieve as well as their peers. This is because the additional support these pupils receive is not always clearly focused on their individual needs.
- Standards attained by the most able pupils over time are not always high enough. This is because the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve well in all lessons. By the end of Year 2 in 2014, however, the most able pupils had made good progress in their writing skills. As a result, a well-

above average proportion reached the higher Level 3.

- Across Key Stages 1 and 2, while some pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, the overall progress made by disadvantaged pupils and the most-able is slower. As a result, from starting points at the end of Reception, which are typical for their age, pupils reach broadly average standards expected for their age at the end of Years 2 and 4.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their individual needs are clearly identified and well-targeted support helps them to learn well.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. This is because of the well-managed support provided by skilled teaching assistants.
- Pupils of Indian and other Asian heritage attained standards in the 2014 Year 2 tests that were above similar groups and all pupils nationally.
- Inspection evidence shows that improvements in the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics, introduced at the start of this term, are beginning to ensure that more pupils are making the good progress of which they are capable.

The early years provision

is good

- The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has quickly brought about improvements in the quality of the early years provision. Staff are well trained so teaching is good, and all groups of pupils make good progress in developing their academic and social skills.
- There are strong links with the feeder nurseries and with parents. This means that information is shared and children are helped to settle quickly into Reception. Children join Reception with skills that are below those typical for their age in language and communication. Ongoing assessments of children's achievement are thorough. The information gathered informs subsequent planning for each child to extend their skills. As a result, the proportion of children who left Reception with a good level of development in 2014 and being well prepared for entry into Year 1 increased to above average.
- Staff have high expectations and challenge children well so that they make good progress in their learning. A few children join speaking very little English. Because of the good small-group and individual support from competent teaching assistants they quickly gain confidence to communicate well in English.
- Staff work very successfully with disadvantaged children as well as disabled children and those who have special educational needs to help them to make similar rates of progress to other children. The most able are stretched so that in most areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics, an above average proportion of children exceeded expectations for their age when they left Reception in 2014.
- Children are excited and well-motivated to learn in a very well-resourced and stimulating learning environment. They learn to share and are considerate to one another. For example, inspectors saw children working together to wrap presents and write Christmas greetings cards which they gave to Santa for him to distribute to other children.
- Children are well cared for and work in a safe environment. Teachers reinforce the school's values and ensure that children gain in self-confidence, learn to respect others and understand how to stay healthy. Children self-register their attendance each day and start to learn other languages, such as Italian. As a result, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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	109514
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	448403

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	343
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Moon
Headteacher	Marianne Allen
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
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