

Little Houghton Church of England Primary

Lodge Close, Lodge Road, Northampton, NN7 1AF

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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 headteacher provides good leadership and has been determined in her drive to improve the school. The governing body and teachers with leadership responsibilities have contributed well to improvements in achievement and teaching.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy learning. They feel safe in school.
- Pupils' attendance rate is above average.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children achieve well and make outstanding progress in literacy, communication and language development and in their personal, social and emotional development.
- The school's performance in the Year 1 screening of pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has been excellent for the last two years.
- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and attainment at the end of Year 2 rose to well above average in 2014. Standards in writing at the end of Year 6 also rose last year and were well above the national average.
- Teaching is good and there is some outstanding teaching in the early years. Marking is of high quality throughout the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school promotes British values and tolerance for others well.
- Partnership with parents is very good and the school involves parents closely in their children's learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils made better than expected progress at Key Stage 2 in 2014.
- On occasion, teachers do not provide exactly the right level of challenge for all pupils in mixed-age classes. When this happens, some pupils make less progress than they could.
- Leaders' checks on teachers' work do not focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on the learning of different groups.
- Achievement in mathematics in the early years is good but not outstanding. Learning resources in some areas of learning do not promote outstanding overall achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in nine lessons across the four classes. Most lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher. In combination with looking at pupils' books, talking to them about their work and checking their progress over time, this provided a balance of evidence on teaching and learning. An assembly was also observed and the inspector looked at lunchtime and playtime arrangements.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the two senior teachers, who are also leaders of English and mathematics, and informal discussions took place with other staff. A meeting took place with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered the 46 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and took into account the written views of a small number of parents. She also considered the 12 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and development plan; records of pupils' attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; and systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils learn in mixed-age classes in Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and in Years 5 and 6.
- Children in the early years attend full time.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well below average, at just 2%. Pupil premium funding is for pupils in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, at around 5%.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Several teachers have left since the last inspection and there were a number of staffing changes last year, when the school was obliged to use a temporary teacher. The school is now fully staffed with permanent teachers. The teacher in the early years joined the school in September 2014.
- Little Houghton Primary School Pre-school Playgroup on the school site is not managed by the governing body and is, therefore, subject to separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress at Key Stage 2, by:
 - making sure that teachers always use information about what pupils need to learn next so that they provide work that is at the right level of challenge for all groups, including the most and least able
 - when checking teachers' work, leaders focusing more specifically on the impact of teaching on the learning of all the pupils in the class.
- Enrich the range of learning resources in the early years to better promote outstanding achievement, and provide the same excellent level of challenge in mathematics as that already found in literacy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and she has shown drive and determination in bringing about good improvement during a period of staffing changes. Senior leaders and governors have high expectations and have established an atmosphere in which teaching can flourish and pupils are expected to behave well. Many of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have become strengths, and the school is well placed to improve further.
- The school's evaluation of its work is accurate and informs development priorities effectively. The headteacher is supported well in improving teaching and raising achievement by the senior teachers, who are also subject leaders for English and mathematics, and training is currently extending their skills well. The leadership of other subjects is necessarily shared among a few staff in this small school. They fulfil their roles effectively.
- The school has introduced a system for assessing the new National Curriculum and it makes good use of assessment information to check pupils' progress. Termly pupil progress meetings between the headteacher and classroom teachers help to identify where improvements could be made, to set challenging targets and to make sure all pupils have equal opportunities. Leaders keep a close check on any possible discrimination and promote positive relationships well.
- The curriculum reflects pupils' interests and promotes their achievement well. A focus on literacy and numeracy is combined with varied topics and regular visits out, including residential trips. Pupils take part in projects involving gardening and enterprise, where they develop valuable skills, and they raise funds to sponsor a child in Uganda.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and there are regular opportunities to reflect and consider the needs of others. The school promotes British values well and successfully teaches pupils the importance of respecting others' beliefs and showing tolerance. Pupils learn about the different cultures represented in modern British society and about the fundamental principles of democracy. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were involved in a 'Magistrates in the Community' project and have explored issues such as 'rights' and 'responsibility'.
- The school makes good use of its primary physical education and sport premium. The school has employed coaches to develop pupils' skills and used funding to increase the range of sporting activities open to pupils. Pupils have all taken part in gymnastics and a wide range of competitive sports with other schools, including in cricket, tag rugby, rounders, dodge ball and tennis. Increased involvement with local sports clubs and greater participation in school games led to the school being awarded the Sainsbury's School Games Silver Kite Mark in 2014.
- The school only receives a small amount of pupil premium funding because so few pupils are eligible. This funding has been spent appropriately; for instance, to increase the hours of teaching assistants to provide individual support for eligible pupils in English and mathematics. It has also been used to buy tablet computers which have supported pupils' writing and information and communication technology skills.
- Almost all the parents who responded to the online questionnaire expressed satisfaction with the school and most of those who expressed their views in writing were full of praise for its work. The school has developed very good partnerships with parents and they are closely involved in their children's learning. For example, weekly open sessions enable parents of all pupils across the school to come into the classroom to see what their children have been learning.
- The leadership of teaching is good and the school has effective systems for managing teachers' performance. These have been used rigorously since the last inspection to tackle underperformance, and effective teaching is recognised and rewarded. The headteacher's monitoring of teachers' work identifies strengths and clear areas for improvement, backed up by good training opportunities. However, checks on teachers' work do not always focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of pupils. For instance, checks do not always make sure that work is challenging enough or pitched

correctly for all pupils in mixed-age classes.

- The local authority provides effective support for the school. It recognises the strengths in the headteacher's leadership and reviews by advisers have helped to identify the school's strengths and some of the areas for improvement.
- The school has thorough systems for safeguarding pupils. The school site is secure, and leaders carry out careful checks on all adults who work with the pupils. They identify possible risks associated with different activities and work closely with other agencies to protect pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective and makes a good contribution to school improvement. Governors are well trained and bring a range of valuable skills to their role. They ask challenging questions of senior leaders and have a good knowledge of the school's work. They are able to talk about what data reveals and are suitably informed about the impact of pupil premium spending. They know about the quality of teaching and have a good awareness of the arrangements for managing teachers' performance. They make sure that the most effective teachers are suitably rewarded and have provided support for the headteacher in tackling underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and helpful, and their positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the good progress they make. They get on with their work quickly and apply themselves well in lessons. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that it has improved. Most parents agree that it is good.
- Staff training earlier this year has increased teachers' skills in managing behaviour and led to improvements in behaviour in lessons. The headteacher makes very thorough and detailed checks on pupils' behaviour.
- No disruption was seen in any lessons during the inspection and pupils showed themselves to be keen to learn. They readily contribute their ideas in class and work well together. In the early years, children's behaviour is outstanding.
- Behaviour outside of lessons is good. Pupils behave well in assembly, at lunchtime and in the playground. Older pupils who are involved as peer tutors, supporting the learning of younger pupils at lunchtimes, show outstanding maturity and take their role very seriously.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their above-average rate of attendance.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Nearly all parents who expressed their views consider that their children are safe at school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and they have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are well informed about cyber-bullying and know about how to stay safe when using computers. They talked about the importance of being safe in case of a fire, and they value the opportunity to learn how to ride their bicycles safely.
- Pupils know about some different types of bullying. They say that there is very little bullying and that their teachers are usually able to resolve issues. Records confirm that bullying is rare and that the school responds quickly to incidents.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is clear evidence of outstanding teaching in the early years, especially in the teaching of literacy.
- Whereas marking was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, it is now of high quality with much exemplary practice. Throughout the school, teachers provide detailed guidance for pupils about what they have done well and how they could improve their work. They often set pupils extra little challenges as part of their marking and make sure that they practise anything they have found difficult. In addition, pupils have good opportunities to evaluate their own progress and to identify how one another's work could be improved.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is generally good. Daily guided reading sessions are helping to develop pupils' understanding of what they read and of how authors choose words for their effect. The use of drama to stimulate pupils' writing has helped to raise achievement since the last inspection and pupils get plenty of opportunities to talk about their ideas before they record them. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to develop a range of skills in mathematics, and their books show that pupils produce a good amount of work.
- Throughout the school, homework makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement. It provides opportunities for them to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills, and to undertake creative tasks, such as making models as part of their project on Italy. Pupils' homework books and the models they have produced show that they put in a lot of effort with work they do at home.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning and their skills are used well in lessons. The very small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively by teaching assistants in class and through work matched to their individual learning needs. The very few pupils eligible for pupil premium funding also receive a good level of support in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning and have very good relationships with their pupils. They provide interesting and varied tasks, and question pupils effectively to check their understanding and deepen their thinking. Teachers plan their lessons in detail and, in most cases, provide the right level of challenge for the different ages and abilities in their classes, including providing extra challenges for the most-able pupils.
- At times, particularly in Years 5 and 6, tasks at different levels of difficulty are set for different groups of pupils but the work is not different enough for the wide range of ability in a mixed-age class. When this happens, the work is too hard for the least able – who rely on the help of teaching assistants to make sense of it – and it does not stretch the most able as well as it should. The progress of both groups slows as a result.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with levels of attainment that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the early years and the proportion achieving a good level of development is above average.
- Currently, children in the Reception class are making outstanding progress in learning about phonics and in their reading, spelling and writing. Many children are producing written work which far exceeds that typically found for their age. Progress in mathematics is good in the early years but it is not outstanding because, just occasionally, tasks are not as challenging as they could be.
- The school has vastly improved the way it teaches phonics, not only in the early years but also at Key Stage 1. This has led to excellent results over the last two years in the Year 1 phonics screening. In 2014, all pupils reached the expected standard, putting the school in the top 2% of schools nationally. The positive impact this has had on pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills is evident in their books at Key Stage 1.

- Standards at the end of Year 2 rose in 2014 to well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Data and pupils' books show that they make good progress in Years 1 and 2. They improve their letter formation and some pupils express themselves in a mature way for their age. For example, a pupil started her story with, 'One sunny morning, Mr Saeed looked out of the restaurant window.' Pupils are competent readers and they cover a good amount of challenging work in mathematics.
- At Key Stage 2, standards in writing rose to well above average in 2014 as a result of a strong whole-school push to raise achievement in writing. Attainment was broadly average in reading, mathematics and English grammar, spelling and punctuation in 2014.
- Progress was good in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 in 2013. The proportion of pupils making expected progress was similar to that nationally in 2014. The proportion making better than expected progress was marginally below that nationally in mathematics and writing, and particularly so for boys in reading. Staffing difficulties disrupted pupils' learning last year and these results also reflected gaps in some pupils' learning from when they were lower down the school. Achievement data for pupils currently in Years 3 to 6 show that progress has been good in most year groups.
- Pupils produce lengthy pieces of writing, not just in English but often in other subjects too, where their progress is frequently good. Improved phonics skills in the early years and Key Stage 1 mean that pupils are now moving through the school better able to read and spell words accurately. The refurbished library and improved reading materials are helping to motivate more pupils to enjoy and develop their reading skills. A visit by a fantasy writer last term has helped to motivate boys to read more.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. They do exceptionally well in the early years and the school has successfully raised their achievement at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics, which had been an issue for improvement at the last inspection. Pupils' books and lessons at Key Stage 2 include clear examples of the most-able pupils making good progress. For instance, they relished complicated word problems about fractions in Years 3 and 4, and their good writing skills and imaginative choice of vocabulary support them well in expressing their ideas.
- There are too few pupils eligible for pupil premium funding to report their attainment without identifying individuals; there were no eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2014. The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding, and records show that the support they receive is helping to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics so that it is good. Disadvantaged pupils benefit particularly from individual support to narrow gaps between their learning and that of their classmates.
- The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is very low. The school provides well for these pupils and they make good progress as a result of the support they receive from teaching assistants.
- Occasionally, and particularly in Years 5 and 6, the most and least-able pupils make less progress than they could in lessons where work is not pitched at the right level for the range of ability and the mixed ages in the class.

The early years provision

is good

- Provision in the early years is led and managed well. There are thorough systems for checking what children can do when they start school, including through home visits, and parents are involved very closely in their children's learning. Ongoing observations of children's learning are detailed, and marking is of high quality.
- Since the last inspection, children in the early years have achieved well and the proportion reaching a good level of development has been above average, ensuring that they are well prepared for Key Stage 1. Pupils are now making outstanding progress in literacy, communication and language development and in their personal, social and emotional development, where teaching is outstanding.
- Children make rapid progress in their letter formation, in writing for a purpose and in using their phonics

knowledge to spell words. The most-able children produce lengthy pieces of writing, and all children draw on their knowledge of sounds and letters to spell words plausibly. Children are aware of the need for spaces between words and are increasingly using capital letters and full stops.

- The teacher and teaching assistants work seamlessly to promote children's learning, and provide them with activities that hold their interest for lengthy periods of time. In a session on life under the sea, children showed amazing concentration and imagination as they looked into an empty bucket and described in detail the creatures they could 'see'. This was only possible because the teacher had introduced them to a wealth of vocabulary on which to draw and because they were finding the topic so fascinating. Some had already produced beautiful underwater collages with a teaching assistant the previous afternoon.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding and they are developing excellent attitudes to learning. They play harmoniously together and respond very well to the high expectations of the staff. As the teacher put it at the beginning of one session, 'I'm going to make it even harder today because we're clever and we can do harder work.' Children enjoy trusting relationships with the staff and clearly feel very safe.
- Provision in the early years has the potential to become outstanding but it is held back at present by some limitations in the equipment and resources available. For example, building materials do not promote children's learning and problem solving as well as they could. Progress in mathematics, although good, is also held back at times by tasks that do not move children on quickly enough when they are ready to take the next step in their learning.

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	122025
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	453564

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Browett
Headteacher	Carolyn Fairbrother
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2013
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