

Clipstone Brook Lower School

Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3PG

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

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.

- Clipstone Brook is an exceptionally caring school community that goes to great lengths to support pupils and their families so that pupils can learn well.
- Excellent systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe in school, and to address any issues that have an impact on their well-being.
- All staff members, regardless of their role in school, put the needs of the pupils at the heart of everything that they do.
- Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, often from low starting points.
- Most children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. It is above that expected for pupils' ages by the end of Year 4.
- Governors know the school well. They are rigorous and effective in holding the senior leaders to account.
- The headteacher leads the school well. Fully supported by senior staff, she sets high standards and expects them to be met.
- Any underperformance is tackled effectively but sensitively so that staff morale is high and staff are proud to work in the school.
- The curriculum and additional learning activities are well planned. They promote pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development effectively, and prepare pupils well for life in 21st century Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics because not all teachers ask enough of their most-able pupils.
- When they mark pupils' work in mathematics, teachers do not always let pupils know what they need to do to improve their skills.
- The most-able children in the Reception year are not fully equipped to begin the more demanding work they will find in Key Stage 1.
- The school's data does not give clear enough information on the starting points of children who enter the early years at different points in the school year. This means that teachers do not have accurate information to develop these children's speaking, listening and mathematical skills further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons and two assemblies. Three of the visits to classrooms were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors talked to pupils about their progress and the work in their exercise books.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes were observed in lessons, assemblies, playtimes, when they moved around the school, during lunchtime, and at the beginning and end of the school day. The inspectors also spoke with pupils about their perceptions of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' writing, mathematics, science and other exercise books with the senior leaders, and heard some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors. The lead inspector spoke to the school's improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account the 17 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and parents' written comments. They held informal discussions with a sample of parents.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in the survey responses from 25 members of staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, which included: the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress; records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body and the senior leadership team; information about pupils' progress; records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Timothy McGuire

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Clipstone Brook Lower School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds with a few from minority ethnic groups including Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children of Irish Heritage.
- One in three pupils is supported through the pupil premium and this is above the national average. This additional funding is to support the education of disadvantaged children such as those looked after by the local authority, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is over one in three, which is well above the national average.
- Children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis and the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The school runs its own breakfast club. There is also privately run before- and after-school provision on the school site; this privately run provision is inspected separately.
- The school is a member of a learning community known as Local Community 2 (LC2) and gives support to other schools on issues of Special Educational Needs and Disability.
- Because pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6, do not apply.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work
 - pupils build up their calculation and problem-solving skills as they move through the school so that they develop the advanced skills they need to reach higher levels by the time they leave
 - teachers always have the highest expectations of what the most-able pupils can achieve.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the early years by:
 - gathering more detailed information on the starting points of pupils who join partway through the school year.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed well by the headteacher and other senior leaders. Their strong commitment to improvement has resulted in better teaching and rising attainment in this current year. Senior leaders know their school well. The school improvement plan has the right priorities and leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff are proud to work in the school. The very positive relationships between adults, pupils and especially with the parents, provide an inclusive environment for learning where pupils behave well and flourish, academically and socially.
- Senior leaders use effective procedures to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Their analysis of learning has shown that the teaching of phonics (how letters link with sounds) needs further improvement. They have recently taken steps to bring that improvement about but it is too early to measure the impact of their work.
- Subject leaders are well trained. They are fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning and play a crucial role in mentoring and coaching teachers who are new to the school. They ensure that teachers are supported in meeting their targets by regularly checking pupils' progress. Their strategies to improve standards in mathematics and phonics teaching are highly effective in boosting pupils' current performance.
- The headteacher gives teachers good guidance on how to improve their skills. With the senior leadership team, she ensures that staff training is chosen carefully in line with individual needs and the priorities in the school improvement plan. The school also makes effective use of expertise from the learning community (LC2) to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school has prepared well for changes to the demands of the new National Curriculum and the way in which pupils' progress is measured. There are strong links between subjects, and a sharp focus on learning key skills.
- The curriculum is flexible and adapted to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including Travellers, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Carefully chosen topics develop pupil's interest, not least because pupils are increasingly determining some of their own learning within them.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of life and values in modern, democratic Britain. They make meaningful comparisons of, for example, religions and cultures that are different from their own. Pupils have visited Bedford to learn more about different faiths. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and it tackles any form of discrimination robustly so that individuals are valued and respected.
- Senior leaders monitor the progress and attainment of all individual pupils in detail to ensure that all are making at least good progress. The information gained is used effectively to provide individual support when necessary. However, leaders did not analyse the performance of the many pupils who joined the Reception class from other providers in 2014 as effectively as that of pupils who transferred from the school's own Nursery class.
- The school's effective use of its primary school sport funding is broadening pupils' sporting opportunities while developing the expertise of staff by using specialist coaches. Pupils now have more opportunities to try activities such as gymnastics and cheerleading. Staff and parents recognise that the pupils' physical stamina is much stronger as a result. Pupils are also beginning to take part in competitive sport, as was evident during the inspection when the school played its first football match with another school, both schools having a mixed gender team.
- The school's partnerships with parents and carers are excellent. The headteacher 'meets and greets' the

parents and carers at the start and end of the day and they value greatly the opportunities this gives them to talk about any problems they may have.

- Pupil premium funding is spent on programmes to develop reading, writing and mathematics and to provide extra resources and support, including the nurture group, where this is necessary. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently make the same good progress as all other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's own breakfast club, which is for the pupils supported through the pupil premium, is popular and well attended. In it, adults provide pupils with opportunities to develop their social skills and creativity in a welcoming and caring atmosphere.
- Safeguarding procedures meet the government's current requirements. The school goes beyond the minimum requirements, particularly in its provision for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and in providing detailed assessments of risks, not only for visits but also for individual pupils.
- The early years is well led. Links with parents and carers of children in the Nursery and Reception classes are particularly strong. Parents and carers make appropriate contributions to their children's learning.
- The local authority knows the school well. It has supported the school well in helping to improve the quality of teaching and early years provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make regular visits to the school where they gain an accurate view of the school's performance. They show that they have an accurate view of its strengths and areas for further improvement.
 - The governing body has a good understanding of pupils' achievement and how this compares with that of other schools. Governors check carefully on the impact of initiatives to develop pupils' personal development and academic achievement, as both are equally important to them. Governors influence school improvement by challenging leaders, for example, about the standards of higher-attaining pupils in reading and mathematics in 2014.
 - Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. They understand the links between staff pay increases and performance, and support the headteacher in regarding good teaching and tackling any underperformance. They are fully involved in managing the headteacher's performance, and draw on outside advice.
 - The governing body ensures that the school manages its finances well. Governors understand how the pupil premium and primary sport funding has been spent and where it has been most successful in raising pupils' achievement.
 - The governing body makes sure the school meets statutory safeguarding requirements, including its understanding of routine health and safety checks. The procedures for keeping pupils safe are well established and highly effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school, at lunchtimes and at playtimes. They are polite, and they show care and consideration for others
- Some pupils who join the school do not automatically choose to behave in an appropriate manner. Staff work hard with these pupils and their parents to develop routines that encourage them to develop better behaviour and manners while learning how to respect others and their environments. On a few occasions when activities do not fully engage them, some pupils become fidgety and lack concentration.
- The school manages pupils' behaviour well and policies are regularly reviewed. Pupils are clear about how they are expected to behave and respond quickly to adults' instructions. The school carefully monitors all

incidents of poor behaviour and takes prompt action wherever necessary.

- Pupils are aware of the difference between bullying and occasionally falling out with their friends and of the different forms that bullying might take. They say that bullying is rare and know that adults will help find solutions to any problems.
- Well-trained teaching assistants manage the needs of pupils with specific behavioural difficulties superbly well. They adapt activities to ensure these pupils achieve well in lessons. A pupil told the inspector, 'I sometimes find concentrating hard, but I get the help I need to keep going.'
- Staff, parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the good behaviour in school. One parent reported that behaviour 'is tremendous and staff lead by example'. All staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct and manners at all times. Consequently, lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because not all pupils challenge themselves to achieve as much as they can in lessons. Nor do they always present their work to the highest possible standard.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and now compares favourably with the national average for all primary schools. Staff work well with families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and promote good attendance. Holidays during term time are not allowed. The number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped significantly this year. There have been no permanent exclusions. Pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club behave well and enjoy their time in the club, which gives them a good start to their day.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safe practices are embedded in all aspects of the school's work.
- Exceptionally strong links with professional agencies beyond the school contribute extremely well to the high-quality support provided for pupils and, where relevant, their. Staff, governors and volunteers are meticulous in ensuring pupils develop their capacity to cope with changes in family circumstances. As a result of the support they receive, many parents feel the school is 'brilliant'.
- Pupils are acutely aware of how to keep themselves and others safe. In discussions with inspectors, they showed a mature understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. For example, they know that they should not share personal information and that they should take care when using computers, mobile phones or social media sites.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and engaging lessons, and it enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Staff teamwork and support for individual pupils are clear strengths.

Improved teaching is one vital part in the school's success. Pupils make better progress in writing because it is taught really well. The teaching of phonics is improving and consequently pupils are making better progress in reading than in the past. The teaching of mathematics is generally good, but has some weaknesses in calculation, problem solving and challenge for the more-able pupils, all of which the school is tackling.

- Teachers plan together in key stage groups, developing interesting and engaging activities that promote good learning. They expect pupils to work hard and behave well. This was demonstrated well in a lesson on identifying major issues in a text when a lower-attaining group discussed whether it was fair if poor children did not go to school. Their answer, relating education to getting a job, demonstrated good understanding of how to find meaning behind the written word.

- Teachers encourage pupils to assess for themselves how well they have understood what they have been taught. This is an effective part of the school's work because pupils are identifying how well they know what they have learned and this motivates them to work hard.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics each half term and then meet to consider each pupil's progress in these subjects. They use this information well to identify and provide support for pupils who might fall behind.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. The extra help they get in the classroom and at other times is effective because it focuses well on the individual needs of each pupil. Many of these pupils make better than the expected progress from their different starting points.
- The adult support for disadvantaged pupils is sharply focused and effective. Work is tightly monitored and progress is often very rapid because good staffing ratios mean the pupils who are most in need get one-to-one attention.
- The day-to-day marking of pupils' work in mathematics is weaker than that of their writing. Pupils do not have clear enough guidance on how to improve their work in mathematics, and the most-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to develop their skills further. In addition, pupils' progress is sometimes limited because they do not build up their mathematical skills fully and use these skills in different subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. Their language, personal, social and emotional, literacy and number skills are particularly weak. Children make good progress throughout the early year, notably in their speaking, listening, number work, physical development and in making friends. Even with this good progress, last year, a below-average proportion achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception year from their starting points. Reading and writing skills were the least well developed
- In the Year 1 reading screening check in 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level was above that of the previous year and below the national average. The pupils who struggle to read are now being given effective support. This is leading to rapid improvement. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 are also being taught phonics in a more focussed way, but it is too soon for the full impact to be measured.
- Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen. Although standards reached in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with the national average, the higher attaining pupils did not do well enough in mathematics in 2014.
- Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 so that, by the end of Year 4, a small but growing proportion of pupils are working at levels that are above those expected for their age. This is due to the good teaching and support given to these pupils.
- Achievement in writing is good. New initiatives were introduced to encourage pupils, particularly boys, to become confident young writers. Some individual pupils make impressive progress. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils now make good progress in writing throughout the school.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education by the time they leave school. This is because they achieve well academically and have made great strides in their personal development. Pupils are set individual personal and learning targets that have a positive impact on their independent reasoning skills.
- Most pupils make good progress in mathematics, reading and writing because of the good quality of teaching and support they receive. As a result the difference between the performance of girls and boys in mathematics has been reduced.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are very positive in their approach to learning and make good progress overall. The support they receive is carefully directed and helps them to achieve well. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have made good progress and, by the end of Year 4, some have made exceptional progress. This success is due to good systems which enable early recognition of significant needs.
- The good progress made by disadvantaged pupils compares favourably with that of other pupils in the school, and with pupils nationally. In 2014, at the end of Year 2, these pupils were a term ahead of their classmates in reading, half-a-term ahead in writing and half-a-term behind in mathematics. When compared with pupils nationally, they attained in line with the national average in reading and writing but were slightly behind in mathematics.
- Until recently, the most-able pupils did not always make as much progress as they should, particularly in mathematics and writing. School data show that their current progress is good, especially in reading. Initiatives to extend these pupils' mathematical skills are too recently in place to have shown impact on their learning.

The early years provision

is good

- In most years, children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age, especially in speaking and listening, reading, writing, their understanding of numbers and counting. They make good progress in the Nursery and enter the Reception class with improved skills in all areas of learning.
- In the early years, staff focus their attention on children's personal and social skills, and their language skills effectively. As a result, children quickly gain confidence in speaking and listening and although progress is good their language development and number skills still lag behind other areas such as personal and social development.
- The teaching of phonics is greatly improved and is well established across the school. This is because staff have worked on a new approach to their teaching and are now more confident in the teaching of phonics. Children in the Reception classes are developing better the basic skills needed to read and write. Teaching in Year 1 and 2 builds very well on this good start. The changes in approach are showing greater consistency but it is too early to measure their full impact.
- Children made good progress in the Reception class and, reflecting their low starting points, approximately half enter Year 1 with the skills and abilities that are expected at that age. The most-able children, however, do not make as much progress as they should.
- Children are keen to learn and show great levels of concentration when working independently. This was demonstrated when one child was determined to create a train track that would take his long train. Their attitudes to learning are good.
- Children show good behaviour and attitudes to each other, for example during role-play activities as they play patiently with one another. Children talk easily to tell adults about their play. One child playing in role as a pirate told the adult that, 'The barrel contains beer- just like it does in Morrisons!' Adults provide timely support and encourage children to make their own choices right from the start.
- Children are absorbed in their learning because adults provide exciting activities that are generally well matched to children's abilities and interests. An extremely successful focus on encouraging children to talk about their learning is developing their speaking and listening skills well. When using the computer-linked electro microscope to examine their skin and hair, a part of their work on bodies, pupils talked about the hair being 'sticky outy', 'frizzy' and 'banana shaped'.
- Adults promote children's early reading skills through a daily phonics lesson. They encourage active participation, and this is developing children's enjoyment in learning letters and the sounds they make. The mathematics area is well equipped and encourages children to engage in early number work, helping

them to develop good counting skills.

- Teaching and support staff plan together to ensure consistent approaches. The children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Staff emphasise the importance of being polite and helpful to each other, especially at snack time, when children sit and talk with each other and the adults about their fruit or what they have learned earlier in the day.
- Teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve in the early years. More activities aimed at improving children’s language and literacy skills are being employed and are already proving successful in raising achievement.
- Parents are successfully encouraged to play an active role in their child’s learning. Regular newsletters and good communication promote a partnership between school and home. The staff have created digital ‘learning journeys’ that detail children’s achievements. Parents contribute to these by logging on the school’s computer system remotely and recording children’s activities and achievements at home.
- The early years are led well by an experienced teacher who has accurately identified the strengths of her area and what can be further developed. This has included the need to improve upon the school’s data gathering system in place in the early years to ensure even greater detail in the baseline data in use. This applies particularly to the children who join the early years other than at the normal time.

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	109521
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	448656

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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Luker
Headteacher	Angie Hardy
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2010
Telephone number	01525 376085
Fax number	01525 217897
Email address	clipstone@cbc.beds.sch.uk

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