

Downside Primary School

Chaul End Lane, Luton, LU4 8EZ

Inspection dates 6–7 May 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 school has been very well led by the headteacher, governing body and senior leaders since the last inspection. This strong leadership has improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement to good.
- The development of a strong tier of middle leaders had had a positive impact, especially on the quality of teaching. Because of this the school is continuing to improve.
- Pupils' attainment has risen steadily for the last three years. By the time pupils leave the school, their attainment is broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress from their different starting points.
- Strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils are growing up with a clear appreciation of British values and how these are based on respect for, and tolerance of, others.
- The school is rigorous in ensuring pupils are kept safe. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Teaching is good because the leaders have robust systems for checking on teachers' work and this has had a very positive impact on addressing any existing weaker teaching.
- The good use of a wide range of extra training has had a positive impact on the development of leaders' skills and teachers' knowledge and expertise.
- The governing body provides a good level of challenge and support for school leaders. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and challenges it faces.
- Children in the early years are well taught and have a very positive start to their schooling. They are well prepared for their future education through the development of positive attitudes towards school and a love of learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A smaller proportion of most-able pupils than is the case nationally make progress that is better than that expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not develop good handwriting skills with well-formed letters and an appropriately mature style.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 43 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The inspectors held meetings and discussions with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, some with the headteacher and senior leaders. Several pupils read to the inspectors.
- The inspectors took account of 11 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, and 200 responses to the school's own survey of parental views. The inspectors also talked to parents, read letters from some of them, and took account of 67 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents produced by the school, including data on pupils' progress and attainment, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and minutes of their meetings and the school's plans for school improvement.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector
Carol Eyley	Additional Inspector
Dominic Carver	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Downside Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- A large majority of the pupils are from Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritages. A growing number of pupils are joining the school from Eastern European countries. Around three quarters of the pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- An average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- In 2014, the school met government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school hosts a privately-run pre-school. This is inspected and reported on separately.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the New Horizon Unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs at a local primary school on a flexible and part-time basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the teaching is demanding enough to help more of the most-able pupils make progress that is better than expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the teaching of pupils' handwriting skills so their letter formation is more careful and so they develop a style that grows in maturity each year.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved rapidly since the last inspection and the rising achievement shows that this improvement is continuing. This is due to some excellent, strong leadership from the headteacher. She is well supported by her very effective senior leadership team and a good governing body. This ensures good teaching and behaviour can flourish.
- Rapid improvement has come about because leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have devised detailed improvement plans that have created the basis for the recent improvement. Senior leaders have undertaken training to develop their skills so that they can fulfil their responsibilities and have clear systems for devolving responsibilities appropriately for the size of the school. The new organisation of year group leadership ensures consistent planning and effective teamwork between teachers and other staff. This has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- The leadership of teaching is very effective. Leaders' robust and systematic checks on the work of teachers ensure good quality provision and identify any need for further training. A detailed system for observing teaching, checking pupils' work and analysing data gives leaders an accurate picture of the success of the school. Where performance has been less effective in the past this has been dealt with firmly and appropriately. In addition, when pupils attend alternative provision in other settings, leaders are scrupulous about tracking its impact and success. They make good progress and their behaviour improves. They attend regularly.
- The school is active in seeking external expertise and advice when it is needed. The local authority has provided helpful support and monitored the school's improvement appropriately. The leaders have also sought external support and expertise and arranged regular reviews of its work. These have helped highlight the growing strengths of the school and also to identify the next steps to continue its improvement.
- The available funding for sport is used very effectively. Specialist teaching and coaching is having a very positive impact on pupils' participation and the opportunities they have to try new sports such as archery. The school takes part in a range of competitions against other schools. These give pupils opportunities to meet children from different backgrounds.
- The school works hard to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. A range of faiths and different cultures are studied. The school promotes British values through much of its work. The general election took place during the inspection and staff used this very effectively to teach pupils about democracy. Pupils display a good tolerance for others. Many join the school when new to the country. The provision for these pupils is very well-led; pupils are welcomed and accepted very positively. This helps them to make rapid progress in learning English and to become effective learners.
- The curriculum has been updated to take account of recent changes. It provides pupils with a good range of topics covering all expected subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to use their skills in different ways. For example, the content of pupils' writing is well developed through topic work such as descriptions of life in rain forests. The curriculum is used very effectively to ensure pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The funding available under the pupil premium is used well. The impact of this spending is closely monitored and has narrowed any gaps in achievement and in some classes disadvantaged pupils are outperforming their peers. The school ensures all pupils have access to all activities ensuring equality of opportunity so no pupils are discriminated against.
- All statutory safeguarding requirements are met and are effective. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations including when using new technology. The vast majority of parents are confident their children are safe at school.

■ The provision for children in the early years is well led and managed. Currently the headteacher does this while the school seeks to recruit a leader. Links with some of the pre-school settings children attend are good. Links with parents are strong and they have a good knowledge of how well their children are doing.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the last inspection, the governing body has maintained its good work through changes of membership and training. The governors are working towards reconstituting and auditing their skills. There is an effective structure of committees to ensure their work is efficient.
- Governors have a strong knowledge of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, particularly for achievement and the quality of teaching. Regular visits to the school are made by governors. Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's data for pupils' progress.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties well. They are appropriately involved in decisions about teachers' pay and understand how this is linked to performance and arrangements for this are good. They fully supported the headteacher when she tackled issues of underperformance.
- Together with leaders, governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that all of the school's related procedures are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This view is supported by the vast majority of the parents who responded to the school's questionnaire. Pupils talk positively about the things that they enjoy doing, including meeting friends and subjects such as physical education.
- Pupils are confident that teachers help them when they have problems with their work. They say the teachers 'Push you and help you move up levels'. Their attitudes towards school show that they appreciate that learning is a positive thing. Older pupils have good aspirations for their lives after school, helped by events such as the school's recent careers fair. They talk, for example, of being a chemical engineer or a scientist.
- The vast majority of the pupils behave well in lessons. It is rare for learning to be slowed because of poorer behaviour although this does happen in a very small number of lessons. When moving around the school, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and playtimes, pupils are well behaved and play and work together well.
- Although some children start school less well prepared for learning than is typical, staff ensure that they are ready for their future education and life after school. Pupils show respect for their school and its surroundings and resources. They do not drop litter and they are clearly proud of their work, which is carefully and neatly presented, although their handwriting skills are often not good enough.
- Pupils' response to the school's expectations of their behaviour and social development is good. They have good opportunities to take responsibility and learn about democracy, through activities such as the school council and older pupils enjoy the opportunity to act as prefects or play leaders.
- The school checks that pupils' behaviour at the alternative provision is good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The vast majority of parents say their children enjoy school, are safe and well looked after. Most would recommend the school to other parents. Staff put a high priority on ensuring pupils' and children's safety. On school visits, or during activities on the school site, risks are assessed well and supervision is good. During the inspection, for example, cycling lessons reinforced these messages for Year 5 pupils.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to keeping themselves safe. Play leaders demonstrate caring attitudes towards younger pupils. They are aware of risks such as those they may come across while using new

technology. They know how to keep themselves safe when using computers and other technology.

- Pupils are very clear that bullying is very rare at their school. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to deal with it. All those spoken to are confident there are adults in school who they can trust and would talk to if they had any worries.
- Attendance remains below average but has improved over time because the school does all it can to encourage parents to appreciate the importance of full attendance. Most parents ensure their children attend school regularly and are punctual. Where there is some persistent absence, the school deals with it appropriately.
- The school makes sure that pupils are safe at the alternative provision.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because it has been the main focus for leaders. The issues raised then have been addressed and this has meant more of the teaching is now consistently good. The good teaching has ensured pupils' achievement has risen and continues to rise.
- Leaders check teachers' work regularly through meetings to review data, scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of teaching and displays of work. This regular checking ensures any weaknesses can be rapidly addressed. Teachers, including those new to the profession, talk positively about the support they receive from leaders at all levels including the recent system of year group leaders. One said, 'The effort, support and guidance I have received from the senior leadership team to help develop my ability as a teacher have been nothing short of amazing.'
- Improvement has come about partly through extensive training and opportunities for teachers to share ideas and plan together. Training on teaching pupils grammar and spelling, issues around mathematics and for the new computing curriculum have all had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants also boost pupils' progress,
- The marking in pupils' books and the feedback provided for them is helpful in ensuring they know what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils understand the good system for responding to the marking and evidence in books shows they take note of what went well and what could be even better.
- The work in pupils' books shows they have pride in their work and teachers have high and consistent expectations, particularly of presentation. Even so, letter formation and handwriting skills are not taught systematically throughout the school.
- The teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning in reading, literacy and numeracy. They develop good skills in these subjects. However, not all teachers in all lessons provide tasks that challenge the most-able pupils enough. As a result, too few pupils make progress that is better than expected to reach the higher levels of attainment.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The progress made in Year 6 by the pupils who left at the end of 2014 was slightly below that expected in reading, writing and mathematics. This was broadly the same as the previous year. The school's data for the pupils currently in Year 6, supported by the evidence in pupils' books and lessons observed, shows that their progress is good and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with that found nationally.
- Pupils throughout the school are making good progress from their different starting points in all three subjects. The school has improved the proportion of pupils reaching above-average standards, especially in reading, although a below average proportion of the pupils make progress that is better than expected.

- In 2014, the pupils in Year 2 reached broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is good due to effective teaching and well-planned and appropriate activities. A growing number of pupils are reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics but these remains below average for reading. Current Year 2 pupils are making good progress in all three subjects and are on track to achieve similar levels to last year. They are developing particularly good vocabulary, speaking and listening skills given their levels of language when they started school.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in phonics (letters linked to sounds) have been above average for the last two years. Current pupils are on track to reach even higher levels this year. This represents very good progress in relation to pupils' starting points due to the effective teaching of phonics. Pupils' basic reading skills are good although some read very little at home. The school ensures books and literacy have a high profile through much of its work to encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. Most pupils develop as good readers and talk knowledgeably about a range of authors.
- Progress in literacy and numeracy is good throughout the school. In many lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to extend their vocabulary. Because of this, even young pupils talk knowledgeably about ladybirds and aphids, or symmetrical patterns on butterflies. Pupils produce some high-quality work in other subjects, such as art and design and history.
- In 2014, the gap between the attainment of the disadvantaged pupils and others in Year 6 narrowed. This is due to the good tracking of these pupils' progress so that extra support can be quickly provided if needed. As the published information is very inaccurate, school data show that disadvantaged pupils were around a term behind other pupils nationally and other pupils in their year group, in reading, writing and mathematics. This gap has narrowed significantly throughout the school and in some classes and subjects disadvantaged pupils are now doing better than their peers.
- Throughout the school, too few of the most-able pupils make sufficiently rapid progress to reach the higher levels. In 2014, the most able attained the levels expected of them but too few exceeded them. This was because, in some lessons, they are given work that is not at a sufficiently challenging level or builds well enough on what they already know and can do.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points because of the good support they receive in classes and in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Gaps in their knowledge and skills are reducing throughout the school. Their learning is very well monitored on a regular basis by leaders to ensure that they education they receive fully meets their needs.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English are well supported and make good progress in all subjects. The school has a clear focus on developing speaking and language skills. This results in the good progress evident in the data and in these pupils' books.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision achieve well and the school actively tracks their learning.

The early years provision

is good

- From their different starting points, children make good progress in all areas of learning. Many children join the school with levels of personal and social skills well below what is typical, and a limited knowledge of the world or of how to use a range of tools such as scissors or pencils. A large proportion of children have very limited English language skills. Although they make good progress, the proportion reaching the expected level of development is below that found nationally although rising sharply each year.
- The early year's provision is led and managed well, on a temporary basis, by the headteacher. Teachers and the wide range of other adults plan activities that interest and excite children. The current topic on minibeasts shows how much the children are learning to appreciate the natural world. Staff ensure children are well prepared for their work in Year 1. The school makes accurate assessments of children's attainment when they start at the school. The accuracy is ensured through good checks with staff in other schools and the local authority staff. Equally accurate assessments of children's learning are made

regularly through detailed observations.

- The outdoor area is well-equipped, although small and not easily accessible to the classes. The school has addressed this by making very effective use of an indoor communal area. Staff use this well to support children's learning. There are good links with parents who can attend regular 'drop-in' sessions to see their children being taught. This gives them a clear insight into the work of the school and how well their children are learning.
- Teaching is good. Adults provide a good range of activities which address all areas of learning. The relationships between adults and children are very strong. Adults' good questioning skills, and other interactions between them and children, extend learning very successfully by helping them think and reflect on their activities. Learning records are mainly kept electronically and easily accessed by staff as needed. Displays are used well to celebrate children's work but also to make resources accessible and, as in the case of the caterpillars and snails, to bring learning to life and make it more meaningful.
- Children behave well, including when outside or in a different environment such as the dining room. They use resources carefully and play and work together well. The adults all promote children's safety through careful supervision.

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	109567
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	462081

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	935
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Talat Hafiz
Headteacher	Karen Hooker
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2013
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