

Steeple Claydon School

Meadoway, Steeple Claydon, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire, MK18 2PA

Inspection dates 1–2 July 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.

- The headteacher provides strong and inspirational leadership. She has extremely high expectations for everyone in school and has established a culture where pupils are encouraged and enabled to achieve success.
- School leaders and governors have successfully focused on ensuring all pupils receive good teaching. They have acted decisively to successfully reverse a dip in pupils' attainment in 2014 and have lifted pupils' achievement.
- Teachers make learning interesting and relevant to the pupils. They provide clear and helpful guidance, through their marking, on how pupils can extend and improve their work.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Governors now have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making. They are an effective force in challenging and supporting school leaders and share the headteacher's drive for excellence in all areas of school life.
- The provision in the early years is good. Children settle in quickly and happily. Because of good teaching, they make good progress and are well prepared for starting in Year 1.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at all other times in school. All pupils have a good understanding of the impact that their behaviour can have on others and show high levels of consideration and care.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are good and all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to protect pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- The well-planned curriculum engages pupils' interest and supports them in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Parents have a high degree of confidence in the work that the school does with their children. They recognise and appreciate the improvements that the headteacher has brought about to address the dip in achievement that occurred following the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, the work set for the most-able pupils is not sufficiently challenging. As a result, not enough pupils reach above-average standards.
- The school's work to ensure regular attendance has not been successful enough with a small number of families.
- Some subject leaders do not undertake sufficient monitoring and evaluation to effectively know about the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 14 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met a group of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons. They attended an assembly.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: assessments and records of pupils' progress; the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance; records of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and two middle leaders. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and talked to parents at the end of the school day. They also looked at the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Adam Hewett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Emma Palastanga

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils – those who are supported by the pupil premium funding – is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average compared to similar schools nationally.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club for its pupils.
- The governors manage a nursery on the school site. It is inspected separately and therefore did not form part of the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection there has been a number of changes of staff. The headteacher and the assistant headteacher both started in their posts in January 2014. All the current teaching staff have been appointed since January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching to ensure consistently rapid rates of progress and the highest levels of pupils' achievement by providing the most-able pupils with work that is always suitably challenging.
- Further strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all middle leaders develop their roles in monitoring and evaluating:
 - the quality of teaching and
 - the progress that pupils are makingwithin their areas of responsibility
- Improve attendance by persuading all parents of the importance of ensuring that their children attend regularly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by the assistant head, provides strong and determined leadership that has established a culture where good teaching and high standards of behaviour are expected and achieved. She has an unwavering belief that all pupils can, and should, achieve well in all areas of school life, and has set very high expectations for pupils and staff alike.
- As a result of accurate monitoring and evaluation, the headteacher quickly identified that teaching was not as good as it needed to be which had led to a dip in achievement since the last inspection. She has taken firm action to develop and implement clear policies and guidance for all aspects of school life that are followed by all staff. She has effectively sought out and used external support where necessary, including visits to other local schools, to ensure that best practice can be observed and shared.
- This has resulted in any previously inadequate teaching being removed and all teaching being now at least good. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen over the past 18 months and pupils are now making the progress that is expected of them, and often better than expected progress.
- Pupils greatly appreciate that the headteacher has made a positive difference to the school. They spoke enthusiastically about the newly refurbished library and the wider range of high quality books that are now available to them. Parents have valued the changes that have been brought about, and have had an opportunity to offer their views and opinions through the regular parent forum meetings. All the parents who responded to the Parent View survey were positive about the leadership of the school.
- Senior leaders manage staff performance extremely well. A wide range of regular checks on the quality of teaching is carried out and these checks are used to set staff challenging targets that reflect the school's high expectations. Leaders provide staff, including newly qualified teachers, with very good support towards meeting these targets. Consequently teaching and standards are improving rapidly. The highly positive responses to the staff questionnaire show that teachers and other staff all feel valued and are committed to the on-going improvement of learning opportunities for pupils.
- Rigorous assessment systems have been introduced and these have helped to ensure that pupils' progress is accurately tracked and that challenging targets for each pupil's progress can be set and monitored. External moderation by the local authority of the school's assessment results at the request of the headteacher has ensured that the outcomes are fully accurate.
- The curriculum has been completely revised this year to ensure that it fully meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Pupils spoke of how much they enjoyed the new topics, including one on health and the human body for Year 5 and Year 6 classes where they carried out dissections of animal hearts. Pupils' learning is enhanced through visits, including a recent trip to Harry Potter World, which stimulated and supported a wide range of writing and reading activities.
- Leaders and staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. This helps to ensure that pupils show care, consideration and respect for others. As a result, there is no discrimination within the school and all pupils are treated equally.
- The school promotes British values effectively. Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, including older pupils organising and running lunchtime clubs for younger pupils. Pupils develop a strong understanding of democratic principles, including through elections to the Junior Leadership Team. They write their own manifestos and value the fact that they are involved in helping to shape the direction of the school. As one pupil commented, 'The headteacher has got a Senior Leadership Team. We've got the Junior Leadership Team.'
- Highly effective use of the primary school sport funding increases pupils' involvement in a wider range of physical games and activities and helps to develop staff confidence in teaching physical education. This has resulted in improved fitness levels. An external specialist coach works in each class each week and runs a range of before- and after-school clubs, including badminton and athletics. Pupils are now involved in competitive sports with other schools and are achieving increasingly high levels of success, including a gold medal in a dance competition.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is good. Additional support, including in reading, writing and social development, is provided for individuals and small groups based on accurate identification of their needs. Therefore disadvantaged pupils make at least similar progress to their classmates.
- The local authority now provides good support and advice to the school. It recognised that there had previously been underachievement and has been involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching within school, alongside the headteacher.
- A high priority is placed on ensuring that all pupils are safe within school. Arrangements for safeguarding are good, with regular training for all staff so that they are able to support any vulnerable or

potentially at risk pupils.

- Two middle leaders have recently been appointed and they are beginning to take on increasing responsibility for improving their subject areas. However, as yet, they have not had sufficient time or opportunities to fully effectively monitor teaching and its impact upon pupil achievement. Senior leaders are aware of this have clear plans in place to enable this to happen.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors recognised that achievement had fallen since the last inspection and worked closely with the local authority to ensure that they appointed a strong headteacher to improve teaching. Governors provide a wide range of skills and knowledge. They now closely monitor all aspects of the school's work, with specific governors allocated to different subjects and an effective system in place for reporting their findings to the whole governing body.
 - As a result, they have a clear understanding of the strength of teaching within school. They use the full range of data that is available to them to monitor pupil achievement. This means that they know where the school is successful and have identified where it could do even better. They hold leaders to account and provide high levels of challenge and support.
 - Governors have ensured that they have attended relevant training so that they are in a strong position to carry out their roles and check that the school meets its statutory requirements. They ensure that teachers' performance is well managed and that there are clear links between this and their pay progression. They manage the finance and resources that are available to the school, including the pupil premium, very well and measure the impact of spending on pupil achievement. Governors ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and when they are out of classrooms, is of a consistently high standard. Children in Reception settle in quickly to the school's routines. They form good relationships with each other and behave well.
- There is clear policy in place that is followed by all staff and understood by all pupils. It is based on an expectation that pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to gain Golden Time for good behaviour, and understand that there are consequences for unacceptable behaviour. However, pupils say that inappropriate behaviour is extremely rare.
- Pupils say that everyone gets on with everyone else and that if a problem occurs they like how teachers and other staff will sort problems out by looking at both sides of the situation.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and caring towards each other. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils at lunchtime and take the responsibilities they are given seriously.
- The school has provided effective support for a very small number of pupils with special educational needs who have displayed very challenging behaviour. It has worked closely with the local authority so that these pupils now receive specialist support. This had a positive impact on their behaviour.
- The well-run before- and after-school clubs provide a safe and caring environment for the pupils who attend, and are appreciated by their families.
- The school has robust procedures in place to promote good attendance, including individual meetings with parents of pupils who do not attend regularly. Overall levels of attendance have improved, but they are still slightly below average. There are still a very small number of parents who do not ensure that their children attend sufficiently regularly and on time. As a result, behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to keep themselves and others safe. An example of this was seen during the inspection, on the hottest July day since records began, when all pupils ensured they took appropriate action, including keeping in the shade, drinking plenty of fluids and all wearing sun hats.
- The school site is safe and secure with very good systems now in place to check all visitors.
- Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe in a wide range of situations. The local police community support officers are regular visitors and have led assemblies on how to keep safe when using the internet and on road safety.
- Incidents of bullying are extremely rare and are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils are provided with a clear understanding of why all types of bullying, including homophobic bullying, are unacceptable. Whilst the large majority of pupils know what cyber bullying is, a small number are less secure about what it

means.

The quality of teaching is good

- Since the last inspection the quality of teaching had declined and this had resulted in pupils making less progress. The headteacher has, since her appointment, fully addressed this decline and has ensured that all teaching is now good, with some that is outstanding.
- Teachers all have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that this is conveyed clearly during lessons. Thus, pupils display positive attitudes to learning and settle quickly to the tasks they are given. Teachers plan effectively to make learning interesting and to provide opportunities for pupils to apply a range of skills, including reading, writing and mathematics, across other subjects.
- The marking of pupils' work is of a consistently high standard. Teachers provide clear guidance on how pupils have achieved and indicate what the next steps in learning should be. All work across all subjects is marked to this high standard. Pupils are given time to think about what has been written in their books and to offer a response to the comments. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicated that pupils take pride in their work and make good progress.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive, with pupils listening attentively and with interest to what their teachers say and working extremely well with each other or in small groups. Pupils are keen to share their ideas and to please their teachers.
- The teaching of reading has improved and all pupils now display a deep interest in reading and are eager to access the wide range of high quality fiction and non-fiction books that have been provided for them. An accelerated reading scheme has been introduced and this supports and engages the most-able readers. Pupils are expected to read regularly at home and this is supported well by parents. Pupils develop a real interest in reading and this results in higher levels of attainment than in other subjects.
- A whole school approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) has been put in place with all staff trained in effective teaching of this aspect of reading. Daily lessons take place for all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and this has resulted in pupils making much more rapid progress.
- Pupils' work in books shows that the teaching of writing is now highly effective. Pupils are taught the key skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation well and are then provided with regular opportunities to write at length about a range of subjects. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were required to write reasoned arguments to persuade other people about the dangers of smoking. One pupil eloquently defined the difference between a fact and an opinion by explaining that a fact was when somebody was 99.9% certain about something.
- Mathematics is taught well. The curriculum has been adapted in line with the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Calculation skills are taught systematically and effectively. Pupils are then given opportunities to apply their knowledge to make decisions and solve problems.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is good, due to the introduction by the headteacher of a consistent approach by all staff. Teachers from different year groups are provided with regular opportunities to compare and consider their assessments, both within school and with staff from other schools. Assessment is now used well to measure progress and set targets for achievement.
- Teaching assistants work well alongside the teachers to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need during lessons so they understand what is being taught and can complete their tasks. They provide a good level of support and challenge to pupils of different abilities. They often have responsibility for a specific group and are skilled in using a range of strategies to help pupils who are in danger of falling behind.
- Teaching is not outstanding because, very occasionally, some pupils in a class are not fully challenged. Work seen in lessons and through pupils' responses in their books show that sometimes pupils are set pieces of work that are too easy for them. As a result, the work is not demanding enough for all of the most-able pupils and their learning and progress are slower than they could be.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement has improved rapidly over the past year and a half and standards are rising because the school has taken effective action to increase the rate of pupils' progress. In 2014, by the end of Year 6, pupils had reached broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including work in pupils' books, school data and lesson observations, indicates that current pupils are making at least the expected progress in all year groups and attainment by the end of

Year 6 will be higher, particularly in writing.

- In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who made expected progress was above national levels in reading, broadly in line in mathematics and below in writing. Current pupils are making much better progress, with more identified as exceeding expected progress. Inspection evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work, observations of learning in lessons and school performance data on the progress made by each year group show that pupils in all classes are making good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, standards are rising and most pupils are working at or above a similar level to the national average.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check was well below average. Progress has improved greatly this year following the introduction of a systematic, whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics. The results from the check that was undertaken this year indicate that the proportion attaining the expected standard has more than doubled and is likely to be above average.
- Pupils across Key Stage 1 have benefited from the improved teaching of reading. In 2014, whilst attainment was broadly in line in reading by the end of Year 2, the most-able pupils' attainment was below average. A far greater proportion is working at the higher levels in the current year and attainment has risen in reading as well as writing and mathematics.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013 and 2014, there were too few pupils in the cohorts to compare their attainment with others without risk of identifying the individuals. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to help these pupils to do well in their learning and their personal development.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Teachers accurately assess their needs and provide them with effective support. The carefully targeted teaching they receive in lessons or in small withdrawal groups ensures that these pupils are set appropriately challenging tasks and so they learn effectively.
- The most able pupils make similarly good progress to others in the school. However, a few do not achieve as highly as they could. In 2014, too few pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 and too few attained the higher standards in writing by the end of Year 6. This is due to the level of challenge for these pupils not always being sufficiently high in all lessons. Their attainment and progress are improving. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that more pupils are now reaching the higher levels in all subjects, but is still not consistently high enough across the school.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start in Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. In 2014, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception year was below the national average. However, changes to provision in the early years have brought about rapid improvements in children's progress and, as a result, current school data and inspection evidence show that the proportion of children who have reached a good level of development has risen and is now well above last year's national average.
- Children of all abilities make rapid progress because of the good provision and leadership. They are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1. In previous years, progress in reading and writing has not been as strong as in other areas of the early years' curriculum. The increased focus that has been implemented this year on developing these key skills, including daily phonics sessions, has meant that children are now making at least the same progress as in other areas of learning.
- Teaching is good. Activities are planned well to engage children's interest and to allow children opportunities to use a range of skills. For example, in a lesson seen during the inspection as part of a topic on 'under the sea', children were fascinated to observe, discuss and write about the differences between a prawn and a squid. They worked well with each other and made thoughtful and insightful comments, using complex language.
- Leadership of the early years' provision is good. The leader, together with the headteacher, identified how the indoor and outdoor classrooms could be improved to offer a wider range of activities that appealed to all children. This has helped to develop both the children's independence and to support their learning, especially in reading and writing. Assessment information is used extremely well to plan exciting activities that match children's needs and interests. This is helping them to now make rapid gains in their learning.
- Children's behaviour is consistently good. Children know how to take turns and cooperate well with each other. Information from parents about each child is now used well to help all children settle in happily and

safely. Parents are provided with regular information throughout the year about how the children are progressing and feel that they are involved very well in their child's school life.

- Staff ensure that children are safe and well cared for at all times. Staff have all had the appropriate training in safeguarding and are all suitably qualified.

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	110248
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	456192

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Roberts
Headteacher	Sara Boyce
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
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