School report

Buckden CofE Primary School

School Lane, Buckden, St Neots, PE19 5TT

Inspection dates	8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	**Outstanding**	**1**
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- School leaders and governors have the highest aspirations for, and expectations of, pupils. These have resulted in exceptionally rapid improvements in their achievements since the last inspection.
- Ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the headteacher has established a culture of high expectations for staff and pupils alike.
- Pupils' achieve highly, not only in English, mathematics and science but also in all subjects taught across the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well through the excellent curriculum. The school's aim 'to develop the whole child academically and spiritually' is successfully linked to promoting British values of tolerance, democracy and respect.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They love to learn; this contributes considerably to the school's harmonious environment and pupils' achievement. They are very considerate of others and readily help each other to learn.
- Teaching is outstanding. Pupils enjoy the wide range of interesting tasks which make them think deeply about their learning and help them to reach high standards by the end of Year 6.
- All pupils, including the disabled, those who have special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged, make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- All staff are well trained to implement the school's comprehensive safeguarding procedures. Pupils say they feel very safe and parents and staff agree.
- The school has developed a very effective partnership with parents. The school's website provides a wealth of information about how learning is organised. This enables all parents to keep abreast of the interesting activities undertaken in each class.
- Governors monitor pupils' achievements rigorously to ensure that resources are used efficiently to achieve high academic standards.
- Children achieve good levels of development by the end of their Reception Year but their rate of progress is not as rapid as in the rest of the school. Parents do not always receive informative and well-presented evidence of all of their children's achievements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 21 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and the coordinator for special educational needs.
- Inspectors met with eight members of the governing body, talked to members of the school parliament, and spoke with a group of pupils about safety.
- Inspectors talked to a small number of parents.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at play during break times and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work, displays around school and records of their progress.
- Inspectors studied a range of school documents, including data on achievement, minutes of governing body meetings, the school development plan, the self-evaluation report, the headteacher's reports to governors, safeguarding documents and records, attendance and behaviour data, policies, records of the monitoring of teaching, and information relating to teachers' performance targets and training.
- Inspectors took account of the 63 responses of parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 23 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

June Woolhouse, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Lacey-Hastings	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Buckden is an average-sized primary school.
- Children begin school full-time in the Reception classes in the year they become five years old.
- The school became an academy in 2010 and operates independently of the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The BOSS before- and after-school club operates on the school site and is managed by the governing body.
- The headteacher is a consultant to church schools and a lead practitioner with the local authority and county schools on the latest assessment arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the early years by:
  - ensuring that children make more rapid progress across each of the seven areas of learning when working both indoors and outside
  - ensuring that children's learning journals are well presented to provide parents with evidence of the full range of their children's achievements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is a highly effective leader of teaching and learning. She has a clear and uncompromising vision of excellence which is shared by all staff and governors. Typical comments from teachers include: 'The staff work fantastically as a team' and 'Communication among all members of staff is excellent.'

- Together, senior leaders and staff work effectively as a strong team to deploy resources efficiently and to improve the quality of teaching continuously. For example, the reorganisation of classes has been highly successful in driving rapid improvements in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work tirelessly to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Teaching plans are carefully structured to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to make maximum progress. Well-trained and qualified teaching assistants are important partners in this endeavour.

- Senior leaders are highly skilled at systematically evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Judgements are accurate and their scrutiny of pupils' work is frequent and extremely rigorous. They evaluate pupils' learning against the national expectations for each year group in all subjects, not just in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' individual achievements are monitored closely using the school's detailed assessment system. Gaps in progress are highlighted and trigger an immediate review of what pupils are taught. This rigorous monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is securing the continuous achievement of high standards of teaching and pupils' attainment.

- Teachers are required to increase their professional knowledge through well-targeted courses and by sharing highly effective practice across the school. They understand that pay awards are linked directly to meeting the agreed learning targets set for their pupils.

- Subject leaders monitor pupils' progress robustly. Leaders accurately identify the extent to which pupils have achieved their targets through discussions and by examining workbooks and displays. Leaders check teachers' plans frequently and provide clear guidance to prevent individual pupils from making less-than-expected progress.

- The curriculum is rich and provides opportunities for all pupils to achieve high academic standards, improve their proficiency in sport, and develop their skills in painting, drawing and playing a musical instrument. Subjects are linked through interesting and practical themes which are clearly explained to parents, for example 'Go with the flow – rivers or living things and evolution'. Pupils benefit greatly from specialist teaching of art, music, physical education and Spanish. Their personal development, physical well-being, confidence and enjoyment are boosted through participation in musical performances and inter-school sports. Cultural development is greatly enhanced through the study of a modern foreign language, other countries' customs and first-hand experience through residential visits to France.

- Pupils are taught British values well and they take part in real-life, democratic decision making. They organise their own 'parliament' and elect a 'prime minister'. They consult with their classmates and agree what needs to be improved in school. They are very well prepared for secondary education and life in modern Britain.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the school's mission statement. The school's religious education teaching is skilfully planned to include British values of tolerance, democracy, the rule of law, liberty and mutual respect. Pupils acquire these values through the high standards set by all adults and the excellent relationships they enjoy. As a result, behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding.

- The special educational needs coordinator continues to improve provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She leads staff very well to ensure that these pupils are taught effectively and achieve as well as their classmates.

- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is used exceptionally well. Its use is described clearly on the school website, along with explanations of the positive impact it has on pupils' academic performance and well-being.

- Primary sports funding is used effectively to increase the quality of teaching in physical education. Pupils receive specialist teaching and have access to after-school clubs and opportunities to compete with other schools. They use the school sports field to increase their fitness by running or walking around the perimeter during play times and after lunch. Pupils recognise the importance of being fit and eating healthy food, as well as developing their team skills in games sessions.

- Pupils' safety in and out of school is paramount. They receive dedicated lessons to increase their understanding of risk and danger, including using the internet safely. Arrangements for safeguarding children are clear and well-understood. Staff are trained at appropriate intervals to understand the requirements and procedures thoroughly. Staff give considerable attention to the care and welfare of all pupils, which is reflected in pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and kindness to each other.

- Effective local authority support has led to improvements in the presentation of the environment in early years and to more children reaching good levels of development. However, the headteacher is fully aware that the present cramped conditions in Reception prevents a small proportion of children from reaching the higher levels of achievement seen in the rest of the school.

- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is very effective and has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
  - Governors bring important skills to their roles and the school benefits from having experts in safeguarding, finance, the curriculum, leadership and religious education. Governors are well led by an experienced and committed Chair.
  - Governors understand data. They ask probing questions about how well pupils are learning and the extent to which they reach high-enough standards of achievement.
  - The governing body holds senior leaders accountable for pupils' academic and personal well-being and the quality of teaching. Performance management is conducted with rigour and against targets that can be measured. The governing body is well informed about all aspects of teaching quality and pupils' achievements. Only those teachers who meet their aspirational targets receive a pay increment.
  - Financial probity is excellent and governors know the impact of their funding decisions. The pupils achieve very well as a result, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, the disadvantaged and the most able. Governors are equally vigilant about the impact of pupil premium and sports funding.
  - The governing body ensures that all safeguarding requirements are fully in place and governors have up-to-date training in child protection and safer recruitment matters.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are confident, sensitive to others and naturally polite. They arrive at school punctually and are immediately ready to learn. Attendance rates are above average and this is testament to pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that they love their school.

- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons, when moving around the school, in the dining room and when they are playing together outside. They are noted for their exemplary conduct when they represent their school in the local community.

- Teachers are consistent in promoting high standards and they have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers and each other. They learn effectively, both academically and personally, as a result. Outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning reflect the school's core values and pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

- Pupils collaborate very effectively in lessons and they accept responsibilities willingly. With the help of

keen Year 6 'playground buddies', the youngest children are helped to gain in confidence and to feel safe.

- Pupils represent their school enthusiastically in the wider community through charitable events and participation in village activities. Some members of the school parliament contribute formally to school staffing appointments as part of their training in the democratic process and their understanding of the importance of independent thinking. They feel very proud to be involved in this important adult process.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils learn in detail about risk and how to stay safe through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme. They talk confidently about how to manage safely the use of the internet and how to respond to strangers.

- Pupils say they feel very safe. They know what to do and who to talk to should there be a problem. Parents agree with these sentiments and appreciate the level of care shown to their children.

- Pupils' safety is a school priority. Safeguarding policies and practice are rigorous and staff are well-trained to recognise any untoward signs in pupils' behaviour. There are robust systems to check the suitability of all adults who work in the school. The school has detailed records of the range of training staff undertake such as safeguarding, safer recruitment and first aid. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly within school and for activities that take place elsewhere. A dedicated governor regularly checks that these high standards are maintained.

- Bullying is extremely rare and pupils are taught to understand what constitutes anti-social behaviour, how to manage it and remain safe. School records confirm that incidents are very rare. According to pupils, there is no bullying in school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Over the past two years, the headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school rapidly. As a result of high calibre professional training for staff in English and mathematics, and dramatic improvements to classroom environments, pupils' progress in these subjects has accelerated rapidly.

- Pupils achieve very well and reach high standards in mathematics, reading and writing because their interest is captured by well-planned and stimulating activities. They are expected to do their very best and their progress is clearly demonstrated by their high quality written work and well-presented mathematical tasks. Classrooms buzz with activity because teachers set a high level of challenge and pupils respond with enthusiasm to solve problems and deepen their understanding. This was the case in a Year 1 writing lesson where pupils enjoyed the story of *Elmer the Elephant* before producing their own impressive interpretations of the elephant's character and feelings in pieces of extended writing.

- Reading is well taught throughout the school. Pupils learn phonics (the sounds that letters represent) in a systematic way, on a daily basis, beginning in the early years. This provides pupils with a secure foundation for reading development as they move through the school.

- A computer-based reading system allows individual pupils to practise reading both in school and at home. They regularly check their levels of comprehension and assess their own progress. Teachers also access this information to monitor whether or not pupils' progress in reading is sufficient. The school library contains an extremely wide selection of stimulating fiction and non-fiction texts to support learning across subjects and reading for pleasure.

- Teachers plan lessons well according to the school's agreed policies. Pupils of all abilities are fully informed about what they are about to learn and what steps they need to take to succeed. High quality resources are accessible to pupils and they are taught well to organise themselves quickly when beginning new tasks. The school's focus on communication ensures that pupils first articulate what they are going to do, for example to solve problems or write about the character in a book. Leaders acknowledge this as a major factor in deepening pupils' understanding in English and mathematics and improving their rates of

progress.

- Teachers probe pupils' understanding with highly effective use of questions and check throughout lessons for any misconceptions or difficulties. Work is marked consistently well in all classes, and pupils know how to improve their work by following their teachers' written comments. Pupils are given time to reflect on what they have written and to make corrections. Younger pupils benefit from direct verbal feedback. Progress sheets are used well to show pupils what they have achieved and, importantly, what they will be learning next.

- Teachers' specialist subject knowledge and emphasis on the development of important learning skills in art, physical education, music and Spanish enable pupils to develop their personal skills of cooperation, concentration and persistence to a high level. These skills are transferred very successfully to other subjects, with excellent results in pupils' achievements and physical well-being.

- Teaching assistants are well trained. They provide excellent support for pupils who have special educational needs and small groups of pupils needing to improve their skills in reading, writing or mathematics.

- Homework is well designed to improve pupils' communication skills and to encourage discussion about their learning at home.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Over the past two years, the school took decisive actions to improve pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils' progress accelerated markedly in these two years. The work in pupils' books from the last academic year and from the current term show that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in each year group.

- By the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2014, pupils reached standards in English and mathematics that were significantly above the national average. By the end of both key stages, all pupils achieved at least the typical level of attainment in all three subjects, with above average proportions exceeding them. These high standards are again reflected in the recent results from the 2015 national tests in Years 2 and 6.

- Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their reading skills. Phonics is well taught and, as a result, pupils throughout the school read exceptionally well. Older pupils read fluently and with good understanding of the meaning of the text. The results of the Year 1 national check on pupils' skills in phonics in 2014 were well above average. Pupils' writing is also of a high standard in all classes and this is reflected in the high proportion reaching the highest standard by the end of Year 6. The quality of pupils' writing in other subjects is exceptionally high.

- All groups of pupils achieve well and no groups fall behind. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates. This is because they receive excellent support from well-trained and experienced teaching assistants.

- Disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding benefit from expert teaching. They make better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, taking account of their starting points. In 2014, there was a gap of less than half a term compared with their Year 6 classmates in reading and mathematics. A two-term gap existed in writing but this has now been closed. The number of disadvantaged pupils in 2015 is too small to make a meaningful comparison of their attainment with either their classmates or with other pupils nationally.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has significantly increased the demands made of the most-able and talented pupils in all subjects. In 2014, the proportion achieving Level 5 or above was significantly above the national average in mathematics, reading and writing. These high standards have been sustained in 2015 with a number of pupils benefiting from specialist teaching within school to achieve the highest Level 6 in mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- Children begin the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. A large majority of children achieve good levels of development and this has improved further in 2015. Children are well prepared for Year 1 because their social and emotional skills are well developed, they listen attentively and pay attention to adults.

- The early years provision is led and managed well. Staff are trained well to ensure that children are kept very safe. The extremely caring atmosphere and highly supportive relationships with staff help to foster children's positive attitudes to learning and play.

- Children enthuse about their learning, behave very well and cooperate in small groups or pairs very effectively. They organise resources for themselves, for example when they set up games to check their phonic knowledge after receiving good instruction from their teacher.

- Staff are knowledgeable and fully understand the needs of young children as well as the principles underlying good teaching in the early years. Staff plan and work together as a well-organised team. This coordinated approach ensures that children's earliest experiences of school are happy and enjoyable.

- Effective support from the local authority has brought about improvements and has enabled the school to identify shortcomings in the design of the physical environment. Children are not always able to choose activities which support all areas of their learning in the indoor and outdoor spaces available to them. This sometimes slows the progress they make in developing specific skills.

- Childrens' work in their learning journals is shared with parents and their contributions to documenting their children's progress are included. The presentation of this material does not match the high standards seen elsewhere in the school and it does not always provide parents with evidence of the full range of their children's achievements.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	137639
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	462131

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Jarvis
Headteacher	Alison Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2014
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