

Westoning Lower School

High Street, Westoning, Bedford, MK45 5JH

Inspection dates 1–2 July 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.

- Leaders, managers and governors have been relentless in ensuring improvement in teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupil's achievement and the quality of teaching are good and the school is continuing to improve.
- Governors have a good understanding of what the school does well and how it can improve further. They are effective in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Pupils achieve very well in writing. Children make exceptional progress in writing in the Reception class and attainment in writing is above average in all year groups.
- Pupils' attainment is above what is typical for their age by the end of Year 4 because of the good progress they make across the school.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide helpful support to them in how to improve it and make more rapid progress.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They are safe in school and say they feel safe there.
- Children in the early years achieve well in all areas of learning because teaching staff work together effectively to provide them with stimulating activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide work that fully stretches the abilities of the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not make the most of every opportunity to inspire learning.
- Leaders and managers do not have the full confidence of all parents, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in a wide range of lessons and activities led by teachers and teaching assistants. All observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed assemblies, lunchtimes and playtimes, and pupils arriving and leaving school.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, teaching and other staff, school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- The inspector took account of the 57 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire. The inspector also obtained the views of several parents arriving with their children at school.
- The inspector observed the school at work and considered a range of documentation. This included school and other information on pupils' progress and attainment, school improvement planning and the school's work to judge its own performance. In addition, the inspector looked at minutes of governing body meetings and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westoning Lower School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those supported by the pupil premium) is considerably lower than in most schools. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- Children attend full time in the Reception class.
- The school has made arrangements to incorporate the on-site pre-school. The pre-school is not currently managed by the school and is inspected separately.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school club.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2015. The previous deputy headteacher worked at the school for a single term between September and December 2014. There have been changes of teachers, particularly affecting Year 4, since the last inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been supported by the headteacher of Dunstable Icknield Lower School, who is a local leader of education (LLE).
- The school is part of the Harlington Area Schools Trust, a group of local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching outstanding by:
 - ensuring the most-able pupils are always challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment
 - inspiring a zest for learning so all pupils make excellent progress.
- Leaders and managers should improve communication with parents so that:
 - there is always a prompt response to any concerns raised by parents
 - all parents have confidence in leaders and managers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have been effective in ensuring the school's improvement since the previous inspection so that it provides a good education for its pupils. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have established a culture in which good teaching is the norm and where pupils behave and achieve well.
- Leaders carefully monitor teaching and manage the performance of staff effectively. Leaders have assisted staff in developing their skills and classroom practice. All staff know what they must do to ensure pupils make good progress. As a result, teaching across the school has improved and is enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Although pupils currently in Year 4 have had unexpected changes of teaching staff since the last inspection, they have achieved well. Leaders have taken care to ensure pupils in this year group have received as good a quality of teaching as in the rest of the school.
- Leaders and staff know what the school's priorities for improvement are and how they can be achieved. School improvement plans reflect these priorities, particularly teaching and achievement. The emphasis given to these priorities has led to a better quality of teaching and the better progress observed during the inspection.
- Leaders make good use of information on pupils' progress to check how well pupils are doing. They check that additional support funded by the pupil premium is effective in improving the progress of the pupils eligible for this support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are closing any gaps in attainment between themselves and their peers. Because the school is determined that all pupils achieve well, it works hard to ensure equal opportunity and to challenge any discrimination.
- The leadership of middle leaders has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have, together with the local authority, developed the skills of middle leaders. Consequently, middle leaders have gained a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are having a more positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The range of subjects the school teaches is effective in engaging pupils' interest. Teachers provide imaginative activities that motivate pupils to develop and apply their skills. For example, in Africa Day pupils experienced the music, art and culture of that continent. Consequently, pupils gained more insight into others' lives, cultures and priorities.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural awareness well through, for example, visits, visitors and assemblies. Provision for pupils' personal development, together with the strong support for it through the curriculum, gives pupils a good understanding of British values, which equip them well for life in modern Britain.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. A strong team works well together to extend children's learning, particularly in writing, and to build effective relationships with all parents in this part of the school.
- The sport premium for primary schools is used effectively. Pupils are taught how to live healthily and are involved in a wide range of competitions and additional activities, such as gymnastics, tennis and cricket. Consequently, they gain in health and physical well-being.
- The local authority has supported the school well, particularly through arranging links with a local leader of education and through visits by a School Improvement Partner. These partnerships have been fruitful and have enabled staff to learn from best practice elsewhere.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Leaders make rigorous checks before staff are employed. They ensure that all staff are fully informed and kept up-to-date on procedures relating to pupils' welfare and safety.

- The large majority of the parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, and who spoke to the inspector were positive about the leadership and management of the school. They recognise and greatly appreciate the improvements the school has made since the last inspection. However, a few parents, notably those who have children in Key Stage 2, lack confidence in leadership, particularly over communication with the school and getting a rapid response to their concerns.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance has improved significantly since the last inspection and a review of governors' practice. Governors have become effective partners in driving improvement and robustly hold school leaders to account for the school's performance. They know in detail what the school does well and how it can improve further. They check the school's work regularly, including the extent to which it provides value for money. For example, they keep a close check on how additional funding is spent so that it leads to better achievement and more participation in sport.
 - Governors have a good understanding of information on pupils' progress and attainment. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They are actively involved in the management of teachers' performance so that underperformance is tackled and good teaching is rewarded.
 - Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a period of significant change in staffing which has led to some parents and staff feeling unsettled. Governors are aware of this and are taking action to build confidence. For example, they are holding weekly 'surgeries' for parents in order to give them more confidence, particularly concerning changes of teaching staff in Year 4.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard in class. They are considerate of one another, polite to adults and eager to discuss their work. They behave well around the school, and help to keep it neat and tidy.
- Pupils say they enjoy lessons and are keen to improve their work. When they work with their classmates, they discuss their activities and work out problems well together.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. This means that low-level disruption is rare. A number of parents responding to the online survey commented that behaviour was not well managed. However, during the inspection, the inspector saw only good behaviour and pupils said that good behaviour was typical.
- The school provides considerable support to the very small number of pupils who find behaving well difficult. This reflects the school's focus on ensuring everyone has equal opportunity to develop and achieve well. Other pupils show care and sensitivity towards those pupils who have additional difficulties or find behaving challenging. All pupils get on well together regardless of their background.
- Attendance has risen since the last inspection and is in line with that in most schools.
- The school has recently introduced a system to help manage behaviour using red and yellow cards. This is helpful to staff and pupils but is not yet working equally well in all classes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they feel confident that adults will help them with any problems they may have.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They regularly learn about e-safety and know how to keep themselves safe.
- The before- and after-school clubs provide pupils with a safe a friendly place to spend time together. The clubs are popular and pupils say they are a most enjoyable place to go.

- The school's procedures are very effective in checking whether adults who work in the school are suitable. All staff know what they should do if they have any concerns for the safety of a pupil or colleague. Leaders and governors have had training on safeguarding and safe recruitment practices and make careful assessments of risks involved. Pupils are safe on the occasions when the school uses the parish council's playing fields for sport or playtime under the arrangements seen during the inspection.

The quality of teaching is good

- School leaders have been successful in their drive to secure good teaching since the previous inspection. As a result, teaching across the school is good, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils acquire knowledge well through becoming involved in a wide range of interesting activities. For example, Year 1 pupils measured their shadows on the playground at different times of the day and then thought hard to present hypotheses about why these might be different sizes.
- The teaching of writing across the school is strong. All teachers place considerable importance on increasing pupils' literacy through giving them well-planned and regular opportunities to write. Children make an excellent start to developing their writing skills from when they enter Reception because they are expected to practise every day. As pupils move through the years, good teaching ensures they learn to express themselves accurately and add to their understanding of how to write skilfully for different audiences.
- Mathematics is taught well. Teachers help pupils to think and reason mathematically, and pupils learn to apply their knowledge to solving problems in a systematic way. They are able to draw upon their understanding and choose the most efficient methods to arrive at a solution.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to individuals and groups of pupils. They are trained well in promoting pupils' learning and checking how well they are doing. They are helpful to class teachers in securing learning when all pupils are working together.
- Teaching has a positive impact on learning and achievement in reading. Pupils approach text with confidence and apply their skills in phonics (the sounds that letters make) to make sense of words they do not know. Older pupils are supported to take their reading skills forward. They speak with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and the books they read.
- Teachers give good advice to pupils during lessons on how to improve their work. The marking of pupils' books is of good quality in all subjects across the school. The guidance provided from marking helps pupils to know how to improve their work and contributes to the good progress they make.
- Teachers plan learning well so that all pupils cover the statutory curriculum. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and work hard to do their best. However, occasionally, teaching does not inspire pupils' enthusiasm and engagement with the subject. In these situations, some pupils do not push themselves to the limit in the activity to make the more rapid progress that they could.
- In general, teachers challenge pupils of different abilities well so that learning is demanding for all pupils and they learn successfully. However, in some lessons, the most-able pupils are expected to carry out the same work as other pupils. Consequently, in these situations, the work provided is not demanding enough to stretch the most able and they do not reach the high standards that they could in every activity.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the early years because teachers know the children well and set work that meets their individual learning needs.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. In 2014, standards rose to be above average, overall. Pupils attained similar standards to those of pupils in other schools in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing. This level of attainment represented an improvement since the last inspection and the school's information shows that pupils have made further progress in 2015.
- The school's effective work to improve teaching has accelerated pupils' progress in Key Stage 2. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make good progress. Their attainment by the end of Year 4 compares favourably with that of pupils in other schools in this local authority.
- Pupils achieve well in writing. They make an excellent start to developing their skills in the early years, and progress is maintained across the school. Their achievement in writing has risen since the last inspection. Consequently, pupils are ahead of pupils in other schools nationally at the end of Year 2. In 2014, Year 4 pupils were almost a term ahead of pupils in other schools in this local authority.
- Pupil's achievement in mathematics has improved since the last inspection. Children in the early years achieve well in learning mathematical skills. Standards have risen in each year group in the subject in the last two years. Pupils of all ages are confident to use calculation and solve mathematical problems.
- There have been too few disadvantaged pupils completing Year 2 since the last inspection to report their attainment reliably in detail. However, pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress. This is because the school keeps a careful eye on how well they are doing and teachers arrange programmes of support tailored to each individual's learning needs. Inspection findings fully endorse the school's information showing disadvantaged pupils' good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because teachers are trained specifically to support these pupils' particular needs. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in planning well-chosen learning activities that help these pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils' reading has continued to improve because the teaching of phonics is well planned. This gives pupils more confidence in tackling unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check in 2014 was above average and the school's current information shows that standards are even higher in 2015.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. The proportion reaching the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2 was ahead of national results in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. In most age groups, the most-able pupils are suitably challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment. However, they are occasionally given work which is too easy for them, which prevents more pupils from reaching the highest levels.

The early years provision is good

- Leaders and managers have effected considerable improvement in early years provision since the last inspection.
- Staff assess children's individual learning needs on arrival and enable the children to improve in areas where their skills are less well developed. Consequently, children make rapid progress. A high proportion achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year in both 2014 and 2015. They leave Reception well prepared for learning in Year 1.

- Children’s behaviour is consistently good. They work enthusiastically together in exploring the many interesting activities planned for them. For example, some children studied snails closely to see which food was preferred, while other children carefully matched the colours and patterns of real snail shells when painting their clay models.
- The staff have developed their skills to meet the high expectations the leader has for their teaching, guidance and support for learning. They work together effectively to offer a wide range of stimulating activities that develop children’s basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- The standards of writing in the Reception Year are outstanding. All children make exceptional progress in this skill. Currently, they have already filled at least three books with their writing. They are entirely confident in their own skills and apply phonics successfully to work out words that are new to them.
- Careful checks on children’s progress give an accurate picture of their achievements. Parents value being able to find out how well their children are doing. One parent wrote, ‘I feel very lucky that my son has had a great start to his education.’

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	109490
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	463025

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ailsa Robertson
Headteacher	Jacqui Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2014
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Email address	office@cbc.beds.sch.uk

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