

Clarkson Infant and Nursery School

Trafford Road, Wisbech PE13 2ES

Inspection dates	9–10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher has transformed the school's ethos and culture through her relentless focus on raising standards and building high expectations among the whole school community: staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Progress has improved rapidly and standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The senior leadership team is a cohesive group with complementary skills. They share a strong commitment to improvement and are ambitious for all pupils.
- Governors are knowledgeable and supportive of leaders. They balance support with challenge and hold leaders to account.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy their lessons and are rightly proud of their school.
- Parents praise the improvements evident in the school. Parents, including those who speak English as an additional language, feel valued and welcome by the school.
- The school is highly inclusive. It provides well for pupils who have special educational needs or disability and these pupils make good progress.
- The achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged is rising because the support for these pupils is well planned and appropriate.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement by the end of the Reception Year, while improving, has yet to reach national averages.
- Occasionally, teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know to plan lessons which challenge pupils further so that they make faster progress.
- Teaching is not of the same high standard across all subjects. In particular, in some subjects such as history, teachers' expectations of pupils are not as high as in English and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to accelerate progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage through:
 - ensuring that teachers are confident in accurately assessing children’s progress
 - ensuring that tasks are more closely tailored to the needs of children in each Reception class
 - ensuring that resources to support independent learning are provided and better used by children.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan lessons which challenge and extend pupils so that they make accelerated progress
 - ensuring that lessons consistently enthuse pupils with learning.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they have a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject for which they are responsible, and can plan for improvement more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the time of the last inspection, the school suffered further turbulence in staffing and lacked a substantive headteacher until January 2015. The new headteacher has quickly established a highly positive climate among the whole school community. She has focused relentlessly on improving teaching and on raising expectations from staff, governors, parents and pupils. As a result, standards are rising and the school has rapidly improved.
- Senior leaders work together as a cohesive team and are highly ambitious for the school. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where there is more still to be done. Plans for improvement are detailed and clearly set out the steps needed to move the school forward.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning carefully, visiting lessons often, looking at pupils' work and analysing pupils' outcomes in detail. They challenge underperformance robustly. They provide clear feedback to teachers about how to further improve, and follow this up on subsequent visits to classrooms. This has had a positive impact on improving teaching across the school and improving pupils' achievement.
- Links with other schools have been used effectively to improve the school. The school works as part of a triad of schools supporting each other and sharing practice. Teachers and other staff regularly visit other schools locally and beyond, to learn from them. For example, a number of staff visited an outstanding school and immediately came back and implemented changes to the school's learning environment so that pupils are immersed in learning.
- Professional development provided for staff is used effectively and complements the school's formal programme for checking teaching. Teachers attend courses and also work collaboratively to help each other. This is very effective in creating an ethos where all staff take responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were highly positive about the school and the way in which it has improved.
- Leaders model best practice constantly: for example, in the manner in which they speak to parents and pupils and in their reminders to pupils to 'Be the best that you can'. The headteacher personally welcomes children as they come into school in the morning and thanks their parents for getting them to school on time. This has created a culture where parents and pupils feel highly valued and respected, and where pupils want to fulfil the school's motto and do their best. Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and those spoken to during the inspection, praised the school's leadership and were unanimous in their support of the school.
- The curriculum provided by the school is broad and balanced, and is enhanced by a wide range of events: for example, a visit by the circus and by BMX bikes alongside the good range of clubs which are available for pupils, including the X Factor club, handbells and ukulele club, sports clubs and book club. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about these activities and how much they enjoy them.
- Leaders promote equality extremely well and do not tolerate any discriminatory behaviour. They have established a climate where pupils from all backgrounds are valued and respected. For example, the appointment of a teaching assistant who speaks English as an additional language has helped to improve communication with the large proportion of parents who speak English as an additional language. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are encouraged to speak in their home language in school and key words in different languages are displayed for staff to learn and use.
- Middle leaders are not wholly effective in their roles. In some subjects, such as physical education (PE), systems for assessing pupils' progress are very new and subject leaders have had few opportunities to observe lessons. As a result, some subject leaders do not have a clear view of where improvements need to be made.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have shown tenacity in refusing to appoint a headteacher until they found someone of the highest calibre. Having now appointed, they have provided a good level of support. For example, they supported the new headteacher in challenging the underperformance of staff and taking effective action to effect improvements.
 - While supportive, governors also provide a good level of challenge. For example, governors questioned the headteacher regarding her request for money for new book corners, asking probing questions about the impact this would have on reading standards and how this would be evidenced.

- Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They have reviewed their own performance and where any governor was not fulfilling their role, this has been tackled. Consequently, the governing body is leaner but more effective and more knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Governors have a good understanding of how money provided for disadvantaged pupils is used and the impact this has had on securing improvements in pupils' progress. They carefully monitor other expenditure such as the sports premium provided to increase participation in sports.
- Governors hold staff, including the headteacher, to account through the school's performance management processes. They discuss the performance of staff and the evidence of this in relation to pupils' outcomes, before making decisions about pay awards.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff take their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe extremely seriously. Careful checks are carried out of all staff employed by the school, and records of these are also checked by the safeguarding governor. All statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe are met. Leaders maintain meticulous records of any concerns about pupils' safety and follow these up very rigorously. Staff are regularly trained, including those who start midyear and understand exactly what they should do if they have a concern about a pupil. As a result, pupils are kept safe at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher has put in place rigorous systems for checking the quality of teaching and provides good support to help teachers improve their practice, including support from staff in school, training courses and visits to other schools.
- Teachers use lesson time effectively. They ensure that pupils understand what they need to learn at the start of the lesson and make sure that they quickly settle to tasks so that work is completed. In some classes, time is very well used to enable learning. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils were expected to complete morning tasks during registration, applying what they had learned the day before.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask probing questions of pupils to extend their thinking further. They encourage pupils to discuss their thoughts with others and to share their ideas, which they do readily.
- Pupils' reading skills are well developed because sessions to develop understanding of phonics, which is letters and the sounds they make, are well structured. In these sessions, pupils are taught the sound and encouraged to write words which include the sound, effectively linking reading and spelling skills.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are attentive and respond to requests from teachers because teachers have established clear expectations about behaviour.
- Opportunities for linking learning in different subject areas are used well to enhance learning. For example, writing is regularly linked to the class topic: in one Year 2 class, a display relating to Cinderella encouraged pupils to use their mathematics skills by estimating the number of stars in the sky and the distance Cinderella would need to travel to the palace. Such opportunities enable pupils to practise and develop their skills in a range of contexts.
- The school has a creative approach to homework. It provides home learning tasks, many of which are aimed at developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils enjoy these practically based tasks. For example, photographs show pupils proudly displaying their 'chatterbox boxes' in which they have collected items related to their class topic. They then speak about their items in school and with their parents.
- Teachers provide regular feedback to pupils to help them to improve their work. This is often well used by pupils, particularly in Year 2 where pupils read comments made by the teacher and improve their next piece of work as a result. Occasionally feedback does not help to improve learning because pupils do not understand clearly the feedback given.
- In most lessons, teachers introduce learning in ways that will engage pupils. For example, in a year 2 class, the teacher had made a scroll which she slowly unravelled to read out a message about Robin Hood. The pupils were enthralled and so were keen to complete the following task and did so well. However, in a few classes, lessons are not as regularly engaging, and so pupils, while compliant, are less enthusiastic and progress is not as rapid.
- Occasionally, teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and plan lessons to challenge pupils further so that they make faster progress.

- In subjects such as science and history, teachers do not consistently expect pupils' work to be of the same standard as they are capable of producing in writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and happy in school. They speak readily to visitors about their learning and say that they enjoy school. Pupils told inspectors that there is nothing about school that they don't like. 'We like learning', one pupil said proudly. They know the school rules and routines because these are regularly reinforced by school staff.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that if they have a problem there is a trusted adult whom they can talk to. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, including when using technologies such as the internet. This is because the school regularly teaches pupils about all forms of safety.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because this is given a high priority in school. All staff help pupils to develop their social skills in lessons, through opportunities to work collaboratively, and at playtimes. Pupils take on responsibilities, for example as play leaders, and take these responsibilities seriously. The school promotes understanding of other cultures (for example, through a homework task about Chinese New Year) and promotes an ethos where difference is celebrated. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They learn about other religions and other cultural traditions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous, for example standing aside in corridors to let adults pass.
- Pupils socialise well. They listen to each other and cooperate well together. For example, in one Reception class, pupils were happily role playing together, queuing up and taking it in turns to buy from the 'Sea life shop'.
- Leaders have put in place a range of strategies to improve attendance including attendance certificates, meetings with parents and visits to pupils' homes when pupils have missed school regularly. As a result, attendance is improving and pupils want to come to school each day. The attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged has improved because the actions taken by leaders to help them attend regularly, such as the introduction of a breakfast club, have been effective.
- Disruption of lessons is very rare and pupils told inspectors that behaviour at playtime is also good. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare but if there was any incident, teachers would deal with it effectively. Parents agree that behaviour in school is good.
- Pupils concentrate well in lessons, and do what is asked of them. However, they do not often improve their own work without being asked to. This is because teachers have not made it sufficiently clear that this is what they expect of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved and the standard of pupils' work evident during inspection is now good. In 2015 from low starting points in reading and mathematics, the proportion of pupils who were at the expected standard and the proportion who were above the national standard were close to the national average. However, fewer pupils reached the expected standard in writing. The school has put in place steps to address this, and work in books for pupils currently in Year 2 shows that progress in writing is good and standards have risen significantly.
- Pupils are now making much more rapid progress in Years 1 and 2 because the quality of teaching has improved. In most classes, most-able pupils are being given more challenging tasks and so are making more rapid progress, particularly in writing.

- The proportion of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics test in 2015 was below the national average. However, the school has put in place much more structured support for the teaching of phonics, and this is having a very positive impact on pupils' phonics skills and the progress they are making in all classes. Pupils in the Reception class are already showing secure knowledge of phonics and most are beginning to apply this to their writing.
- Leaders were rightly concerned because a large proportion of pupils entered Year 1 with skills below the level expected for their age. They have put in place a range of support which has ensured that these pupils are now making more rapid progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They are well supported in learning English and, as a result, make rapid progress in its acquisition. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils who speak English as an additional language demonstrate good achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged are well supported and the gap between their achievement and that of others has narrowed, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. The leader for special educational needs tracks the progress of these pupils carefully and support is well planned.

Early years provision

is good

- Learning journeys demonstrate that a large proportion of children enter the school's nursery with skills and understanding below that expected for their age. From these low starting points children make good progress in Nursery. However, progress in the Reception class has not been as rapid in the past and too many children started Key Stage 1 in September 2015 without achieving a good level of development. This has been effectively addressed so that children currently in Reception are making good progress. As a result, the proportion of children expected to achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is set to rise significantly.
- The leader for early years has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the early years. She has quickly addressed many significant weaknesses and has ensured that provision is now good. She regularly checks on the quality of teaching and the progress of all children, and plans appropriately for further improvements.
- Children now benefit from interesting and engaging tasks both indoors and outdoors. The curriculum is broad and good links are made between areas of learning. For example, children playing in the sand were being encouraged to find pebbles with initial sounds hidden in the sand and to match them to animals with the same initial sound.
- The Nursery and Reception classes are attractive and vibrant learning environments. They are well resourced and well organised. Children are encouraged to be independent, for example in putting on their coats and boots from the time they start in Nursery.
- Adults provide good support for children, intervening in independent play to extend children's skills. They ask questions appropriately. For example, an adult observed a child making pretend cakes and placing a number on the top and asked the child, 'Can you tell me the number on the top of your cake?' and followed up with 'Can you find a higher number?'
- Children with English as an additional language are very well supported in class and through additional support provided. They are encouraged to speak in both their home language and in English and, as a result, quickly develop confidence in speaking and rapidly acquire the basics of spoken English.
- Children behave well and socialise with each other happily. They share resources and talk confidently to each other and to adults as part of their play. They are imaginative and keen to take part in tasks provided.
- Adults take good care of children and ensure that they are kept safe. They ensure that children's welfare is well provided for.
- The needs of children who have special educational needs or disability are well catered for. Adults plan carefully so that these children are well supported and make good progress.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to support learning. Home learning is valued; examples of learning at home are evident in classrooms and parents inform staff of 'Wow!' moments.

- Occasionally, teachers are too accepting of children's first attempts at tasks instead of encouraging them to improve further. They do not always provide the correct resources to enable children to be more independent in their tasks, for example by providing letter and word mats to support children when writing.
- Teachers who are new to early years are overly cautious in their assessments of what some children can do and so sometimes underestimate their capacity for further progress. As a result, teachers' assessments of children do not always match the achievement evident in learning journeys and when speaking with children.
- Teachers in the Reception classes plan together, which provides a high degree of consistency of provision between the three classes. However, sometimes too little account is taken of the differing needs and enthusiasms of children in each class and so plans are not sufficiently well matched to their needs.

School details

Unique reference number	110649
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10001950

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Barker
Headteacher	Rachel Hartopp
Telephone number	01945 584867
Website	http://www.clarksonschool.info
Email address	Office@clarkson.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Around a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability supported by an education, health and care plan or a statement is below average.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, playtimes and lunchtimes. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books with senior leaders, school assessment information, the headteacher's evaluation of teaching and learning, and a range of school documents.
- Inspectors met with a selection of parents in the playground and with some pupils from Years 1 and 2.
- Inspectors heard a small number of pupils read.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority and with two members of the governing body.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, arrangements for e-safety (keeping children safe online when using electronic media) and risk assessments undertaken for educational visits.
- The views of 24 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account.

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