

Lawnside Lower School

Lawnside, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 0LX

Inspection dates

28–29 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent and pupils are not making good enough progress. Standards in mathematics fell at the end of key stage 1 this year.
- Many of the changes to systems and procedures are at an early stage of development and it is too soon to see their impact. The school's tracking system is not fully up and running yet.
- Too few pupils reach greater depth by the end of Year 4. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are not challenged enough.
- In some classes, pupils do not have enough physical education.
- In key stage 2, teachers' expectations of pupils' learning in other subjects are not as high as they are in English and mathematics. This means that pupils do not make the progress they should in these subjects.
- Too few children leave the early years exceeding the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. At times, activities do not extend their thinking sufficiently.
- Governors have not held leaders to account well enough for the spending of additional funding such as the pupil premium. They have not ensured that the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has worked hard to bring about improvements in a short space of time. She has given more responsibility to subject leaders and increased outcomes in phonics.
- There are strengths in the teaching of reading and writing in Year 2.
- From an early age, children and pupils learn to form their letters correctly so that their handwriting is neat.
- The pastoral care of pupils is good. Many vulnerable pupils receive effective support and this helps them become ready to learn.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to be consistently good across the school, including in early years, so that teachers:
 - plan challenging work for all children and pupils whatever their starting points, especially the most able
 - deepen pupils' understanding, particularly in mathematics, so that more reach greater depth by the end of Year 4.
- Improve the curriculum, especially at key stage 2, to make it broader to cover all aspects of learning so that:
 - pupils have more opportunities for physical education
 - teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are as high for other subjects as they are for English and mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by making sure that:
 - leaders use data effectively to give them a clear overview of the progress of groups of pupils
 - the school's website fully complies with statutory requirements
 - governors increase their effectiveness at holding the school to account for the performance of pupils and the spending of additional funding such as the pupil premium.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching is inconsistent and standards in some subjects, especially mathematics, are too low.
- The acting headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and what it needs to improve further. In a short period of time, she has worked well with other leaders and governors to bring some stability to the school and to accelerate the rate of improvement.
- Leaders and governors acknowledge that the school has been through a difficult period but have put that behind them and are moving forward with confidence and enthusiasm. However, while the acting headteacher and other leaders have developed new systems and strategies for improvement, it is too soon to see their full impact. For example, the school's tracking system is at an early stage of being upgraded and this means that it is difficult for leaders to gain a full overview of the progress of different groups of pupils.
- In key stage 2, the breadth of the curriculum for other subjects varies. In some cases, teachers' expectations are not high enough. Too often pupils are given commercial sheets to complete that do not take into account their abilities, and limit their creativity.
- Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 enjoy a more varied and well-structured curriculum. For example, Year 2 pupils took part in an exciting 'Victorian seaside' day, where they recreated a historical beach scene and ran entertaining sideshows. This taught them a range of skills and drew on their considerable knowledge of recreation in Victorian Britain.
- There are some relevant trips to places of interest, such as Woburn Safari Park, and visitors that enhance pupils' learning.
- The acting headteacher has tightened up systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. She has ensured that all staff are held accountable for their performance. She has also involved all leaders in checking how well pupils are doing in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and governors welcome the very useful and accurate information that the acting headteacher shares with them. As a result, leaders are in a stronger position to take responsibility for their areas and governors are better equipped to challenge. The school is demonstrating the capacity to improve.
- There is some strong leadership of special educational needs and pastoral care. Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. The school ensures that pupils' needs are identified early and that they receive appropriate support to help them keep up with other pupils. Vulnerable pupils, in particular, receive the help they need to enable them to access the curriculum and overcome any difficulties they may be facing.
- Leaders accept that the link between pupil premium spending and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils may not have been totally clear in the past, but the acting headteacher has taken steps to ensure that this year there is a sharper focus on its

impact. A helpful recent external review of the school's use of the pupil premium is supporting leaders well with improving the impact of this provision. It is clear from the school's own performance information that this year differences between disadvantaged pupils and the others have been diminishing in writing and mathematics. However, this has not been the case in reading.

- The sport premium is spent effectively on additional coaching for pupils in sports such as lacrosse and cricket and for outward-bound experiences. It also funds a sports partnership of local schools and training for pupils to become play leaders. Pupils from all year groups, including the youngest children, have benefited from the additional opportunities to participate in extra-curricular sport. However, in the day-to-day curriculum, some year groups do not have enough physical education.
- The local authority has offered the school a range of support with leadership and core subjects and this has had a positive impact, especially more recently. The acting headteacher has played an active role in the process.
- Parents generally can see how the school is improving. Many who spoke to the lead inspector were very positive about the school's work and said how happy their children were. Written responses were also mainly supportive. A few parents felt that communication could be more timely.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise that in the past they have not been as effective as they should have been in challenging leaders about the school's work. This year they have been active in taking some difficult decisions to address concerns about the school's performance. As a result, the school is now in a stronger place and better equipped to improve than it had been previously.
- Minutes show that governors are asking more probing questions. They are confident that they are now receiving full and accurate information about the school's work. This is enabling them to perform their functions more efficiently.
- Governors are less secure in their understanding about how effectively some of the additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is being spent. This is because until very recently they have lacked the information necessary to hold leaders to account for its spending.
- Governors are also aware that the website does not contain some required information about pupil premium spending, the curriculum and aspects of governance. Many of the policies on the website are out of date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has strong procedures for keeping pupils safe. Members of staff ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need to stay safe. All records of concerns are properly kept and analysed. The school goes out of its way to establish good relationships with external agencies. It actively engages with parents and others to

ensure that there is a safe culture. Leaders and governors carry out all necessary checks on new members of staff and ensure that the single central record of staff is up to date and meets requirements.

- The school's safeguarding officer has a very high caseload but works extremely effectively with social services and other organisations to make sure that the school's vulnerable pupils are safe and able to make the most of their education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school. At times, teachers do not have sufficient information about the progress of pupils to set work that appropriately challenges them. This means that sometimes the work is too easy or too difficult. For example, Year 4 pupils were all asked to learn the same poem, even though the most able pupils could have tackled something more taxing.
- In mathematics, there are occasions when the learning does not enable pupils to deepen their understanding. This means that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, do not extend their thinking or have to grapple with problems.
- In key stage 2, while pupils have some opportunities to write at length in other subjects, the quality of the writing is sometimes not as strong as in their English books.
- Handwriting is well taught across the school, and this is reflected in pupils' English books in particular. Children in the early years and pupils through key stage 1 learn an appropriate grip and how to form and join their letters correctly.
- Changes to the way phonics is taught have led to a rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes. Staff have received training that enables them to teach phonics well.
- Teachers explain to pupils what they are going to learn and often help them to understand how they will be successful by the end of the lesson. Pupils are eager to explain what they are learning.
- Teachers encourage positive attitudes to learning. Pupils collaborate well and are respectful. They enjoy sharing ideas and listening to one another.
- Support staff work well with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps them to access the curriculum well.
- Pupils sing very well. Year 4 pupils enjoyed rehearsing for their leaving assembly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and talk with enthusiasm about their learning. They are keen to take part in lessons.
- The very strong pastoral support and effective use of the family-support worker helps pupils on their way to becoming successful learners and builds their resilience.

- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.
- They understand about different forms of bullying. They said that bullying is not an issue for them and that an adult would help them if they had any worries.
- Pupils know the school's values and how these align with British values of mutual respect and tolerance. They learn about democracy through the work of the school council. A pupil said, 'Your vote counts!'
- This is an inclusive school. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. Pupils have a good awareness of the diversity of modern society and are keen to contribute to school life. For example, Year 3 pupils train as play leaders to support their peers at lunchtimes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When the teaching is not fully engaging them, pupils become restless and their learning slows. This can happen when their work is too easy or too difficult.
- Occasionally, pupils can be slow to move from one activity to the next, for example when moving to phonics groups.
- In exercise books, some pupils do not take sufficient pride in their work. In key stage 2 in particular, in subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers do not reinforce high expectations well enough. This means that at times work is not good enough.
- Many pupils' behaviour is generally good in the classroom and around the school. Pupils show consideration to one another. Staff manage the behaviour of those pupils with particular needs sensitively and well.
- The extensive school grounds are kept tidy and litter-free. There are plenty of activities for pupils to enjoy outside.
- Attendance is improving. The school has worked hard to reduce absence. The acting headteacher has raised the profile of attendance with parents. While still below average, it is much better than it was.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Too few pupils reach greater depth by the end of Year 4 in mathematics and writing. There is not enough challenge for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged. This is because they are not routinely given the demanding work that would accelerate their progress. Pupils are not encouraged to think deeply when problem solving, or widen their vocabulary when writing, especially in different subjects.
- Too few pupils reach the attainment that is expected for their age in Years 3 and 4. While the proportions have improved this year compared with 2016, pupils could do even better.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils varies too much. While there is an improving picture, and differences with other pupils are diminishing in writing and mathematics, gaps remain in reading. This is because everybody has made equal progress in reading. Rates of progress are not as strong as they could be because of inconsistencies in teaching.
- Standards at the end of key stage 1 improved in writing this year. A greater proportion of pupils reached greater depth in reading and writing than in the previous year. There are strengths in the provision in Year 2, especially in reading and writing. Teachers have high expectations, and the presentation of pupils' work is neat.
- Standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 declined this year and were well below the previous national average. These pupils had gaps in their understanding due to weaker teaching earlier in key stage 1.
- Good phonics teaching has led to a considerable improvement in outcomes for pupils in Year 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard is now in line with the 2016 national average. Pupils use their phonics skills well when reading and writing. Pupils who read to inspectors said that they enjoyed reading and could explain what was happening in the story.
- In early years, improved provision has meant that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has also risen and is close to the 2016 national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and receive appropriate support. This means that some pupils achieve well. Their progress varies, however, because staff are not fully aware from the assessment information how much progress pupils are making and where it could be improved.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- While provision in early years has improved compared with previous years, it is not yet good. In particular, not enough emphasis is placed on developing and celebrating children's writing.
- Too few children are exceeding expectations by the end of Reception in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able children are not challenged to make as much progress as they could. Teaching staff sometimes do not encourage them to think more deeply or give them more demanding work to do. For example, some most-able children could identify numbers such as 29, but were not pressed to consider what such numerals represent as an amount.
- The early years has a stimulating learning environment that interests children. There is a wide range of activities in all areas of learning. For example, children enjoyed making animal masks as part of their topic on wild animals, and were able to use scissors to cut out the eye-holes.
- Children learn and play well together. Routines are well established and followed.
- Staff know children as individuals and meet their pastoral and welfare needs well. They ensure that children are safe.
- Teaching staff use the electronic assessment system effectively to record children's

achievements and to think about the next steps in their learning. However, their expectations of the most able children are sometimes not high enough.

- There is some good questioning by staff. For example, when children were measuring different amounts of water into containers, the adult asked, 'Which holds more?'
- Teaching staff make good use of the outdoor area and ensure that children are able to access all areas of learning. Children benefit from 'forest school' experiences.
- The early years leader has brought together a strong team that works well. She has established good relationships with parents, who are very positive about their children's experiences.
- Children develop good work habits that prepare them well for the next stage of their education in Year 1. However, academically they are not fully prepared for the rigours of the national curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	109500
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10031592

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Droasamy
Headteacher	Elaine Ashcroft (acting headteacher)
Telephone number	01767 312313
Website	www.lawnsidelowerschool.co.uk
Email address	lawnside@cbc.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium spending, the sports premium, the curriculum or governance on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Plans are well under way with the Bedfordshire Education Schools Trust for it to become a sponsored academy.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- Pupils join the school in Reception and leave at the end of Year 4.

- The acting headteacher took on the role in February 2017 following the departure of the previous headteacher.
- The school hosts a breakfast club and after-school club, which are run by a private operator and did not form part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, spoke to pupils, heard them read and looked at work in their exercise books. Several observations were conducted jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in and around the school, on the playground and in the dining hall.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, the Central Bedfordshire leader of education and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the Bedfordshire Education Schools Trust.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's information about pupils' achievement, the school's evaluation of their work, plans for school improvement and records relating to pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground and considered 24 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They considered 16 written responses from parents. Inspectors also took into account 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Stevens	Ofsted Inspector
James Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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