

Leedon Lower School

Highfield Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3LZ

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from starting points which are often well below those typically found. Progress is good because of the quality of the teaching and rigorous focus on basic skills.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising and the progress made by current pupils is well above that expected.
- The gap in progress between those eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates has narrowed. In Year 2 they are making progress in reading and mathematics that is more rapid than that of their peers.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is outstanding and has a very positive impact on their learning. The school takes great care to ensure pupils' safety.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Pupils develop enthusiasm and a real interest in learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for as teachers plan learning through imaginative activities.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have had a significant impact on standards by improving teaching and learning across the school. They check on teachers' work and provide good quality training for staff.
- The governing body has improved its work. Governors understand how to interpret the available performance information and are more rigorous in how they hold the school to account than at the time of the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing is not as good as in other subjects because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for different purposes and in different styles.
- Teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to observe and work alongside excellent practitioners or to reflect sufficiently on their own practice.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 13 lessons or parts of lessons. Four of these were observed jointly with the headteacher. He also took part in other observations of the school's work and shared the scrutiny of pupils' books.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, governors, pupils, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined. Some pupils read books with the inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of 32 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as over 80 responses to the questionnaire sent out by the school during the inspection. In addition, 25 questionnaires completed by staff were taken into account.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Geof Timms, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Chris Ingate | Additional Inspector |
| Jackie Easter | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Leedon Lower School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for two terms. During the inspection the school was holding a special activity week so it was not possible to observe the more typical, day-to-day work of the school.
- A very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A pre-school setting shares the school site. This is inspected and reported on separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the speed at which pupils develop their skills in writing by providing them with more opportunities to write for different purposes and in different styles.
- Make more of the teaching outstanding by:
 - providing opportunities for teachers to observe and work with high quality practitioners
 - developing systems to encourage teachers to reflect on their own practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When they start school, most children have levels of knowledge and understanding which are well below those typical for their age. A growing number have weak skills in speaking and listening and a poor vocabulary. Children make consistently good progress in the Reception classes although attainment remains below that expected by the end of the year.
- Standards attained at the end of Year 2 have improved since the last inspection and are now close to those expected. This represents good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. Current Year 2 pupils, including the more able, are making good progress and many have made over two years' progress in the past year.
- Attainment at the end of Year 4 is currently above that expected for pupils' ages. This represents at least good progress from pupils' starting points. The progress made in writing, although still good, is not as rapid as that made in reading and mathematics. The more-able pupils made better progress than that usually expected of them in all three subjects because activities provide them with sufficient challenge.
- The progress made since Year 2 by the current Year 4 is above that expected in reading and mathematics. The current headteacher has provided a rigorous focus on the teaching of basic skills. As a result, pupils' progress has been exceptionally good. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys or girls. Pupils are on track to reach similar levels to last year and this again represents good progress.
- Progress in basic writing skills is good but pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use their skills in writing longer pieces of work for different purposes or in different styles.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show standards in 2013 were well above the national average, and this represented good progress. Current Year 1 pupils have also achieved above the level expected. Progress in reading throughout the school is good because a lot of their work is based on good quality children's books. Pupils in the school as a whole have good phonic skills and are able to read accurately.
- There is evidence of good achievement in other subjects. Pupils produce some high quality work using tablet computers in a range of subjects. Challenging science activities support pupils' problem solving skills. For example, Year 4 pupils built strong structures which they knew would be stronger if based around a triangular shape.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective extra help, and the impact of this support is evident in their current good progress. Last year there was a significant gap between the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding and their classmates. Current progress made by those eligible for the pupil premium is good and they are narrowing any remaining gaps. For example, eligible pupils in Year 4 are only a term behind their classmates and making more rapid progress in writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils' work, the school's performance information and inspectors' direct observations in lessons all provide convincing evidence that teaching has improved since the last inspection and is consistently good. Past weaknesses have been addressed by the school and more of the teaching shows outstanding features. This matches the school's view, which is based on

evidence drawn from the improved monitoring procedures now used by leaders. The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

- Teachers ensure pupils' attitudes to their learning, and their interest in their work, are strong. Pupils talk positively about how they enjoy lessons and how they learn new things. In Year 3, for example, pupils talked about their new learning after a talk about archaeology. Other pupils talked about how they could always get help by asking the teachers or the teaching assistants.
- Teachers' use of assessment information and other data is good and has improved greatly since the last inspection. They are aware of how well every pupil in their class is learning and this helps them address any underachievement quickly and effectively. They are also able to check the progress of different groups, such as those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The school plans to ensure teachers have time to reflect on their own practice in more depth than has been the case in the past.
- It was 'shine week' during the inspection and teaching was based around a range of creative and sporting activities to help all pupils find something at which they can 'shine'. Teachers and other adults took groups of pupils of different ages and developed artistic activities, problem solving, and a range of sports and games. In addition, Year 4 pupils were preparing an excellent production involving singing and acting for their parents. The way pupils took part in these activities indicated what positive attitudes they have towards school.
- The regular marking of pupils' work provides them with clear suggestions for improvements and is constructive. Pupils talk positively about how helpful they find teachers' marking, and say they appreciate the way this gives them useful advice on how to improve their work. Pupils enjoyed talking about and sharing their work with the inspectors and showed a real pride in their efforts.
- Leaders have a clear ambition to make more of the teaching outstanding. The work done to improve the way the school checks teachers' performance and offers training is proving very effective. Recent examples include training in the use of tablet computers or on planning the new curriculum. However, teachers have not had enough opportunities to observe and work with outstanding practitioners so that high quality teaching skills can be spread more widely.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good and often outstanding. Throughout the school, excellent use is made of the school's extensive site, the kitchen garden, wild areas and small farm. Pupils who find learning more difficult and those who have specific learning needs are supported effectively by skilled teaching assistants. This helps those pupils take a full part in school life and make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In all lessons observed, and around the school, behaviour was exemplary. Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning and they openly shared these feelings when talking to inspectors. One talked about how easy it is to share any concerns or worries with the teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils have a real thirst for knowledge and are very keen to learn. This has a major impact on their good progress. Throughout the school, pupils thoroughly enjoy their work. During the week of the inspection the range of 'shine' activities provided them with opportunities to co-operate and collaborate, such as when building structures with spaghetti and marshmallows.
- Children in the Reception classes start the day happily and productively, quickly settling into routines. The vast majority of parents have positive views about how much their children enjoy

school and how well they are learning.

- Pupils talk positively about aspects of school life which they enjoy. In particular, they like learning mathematics and they like the sports coaching they receive. They have good opportunities to take on responsibilities such as librarians or membership of the school council. Pupils show genuine concern for others. This was evident during a school visit to an adventure park when Year 4 pupils encouraged each other to take part. This is also true even among the youngest children.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils talk knowledgeably about why they feel safe in school, and the parents who completed the questionnaire confirmed this view. They say bullying is very rare. They are appropriately aware of the different types of bullying, such as through the use of computers or mobile phones, and of how to keep themselves safe while using new technology.
- The support for all pupils facing challenging circumstances is very effective, especially through the work of the nurture staff.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality has improved recently. Any patterns of regular absence are well tracked by the school. Persistent absence has fallen significantly and is limited to a very small number of families. The vast majority of the parents appreciate the importance of full attendance.

The leadership and management

are good

- Since the last inspection, and especially since the current headteacher took up his post, leaders and the governing body have provided a much clearer and more focused direction for the school. Leaders have worked successfully to accelerate pupils' progress and to ensure more of the teaching is consistently good or better.
- Staff, governors and parents talk very positively about the direction the school is taking. All of the parents who completed Parent View said they would recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher is providing strong leadership and is well supported by other senior leaders. The improvements made to the quality of teaching are having a clear impact on pupils' rapidly improving progress. All staff who completed a questionnaire said they were proud to be working at the school.
- Subject leaders, and others with leadership responsibilities, are developing their roles well and receiving high quality support from the senior leadership and good training to develop their leadership skills. The school's view of its successes and areas for improvement is accurate and leaders know what remains to be done to improve further. The planning for future improvement is detailed and contains the right priorities.
- Regular meetings are held at which teachers discuss their pupils' progress with senior leaders and plans are drawn up to address any perceived weaknesses. The assessments made of pupils' work have been checked by the school's own staff, and by the local authority, to make sure they are accurate.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided the school with very effective challenge and support, both for senior leaders and for the governing body. Regular visits have been used to check on the improvements made and to validate the school's judgements. In

addition, the school has been active in using a range of external expertise, such as that in other very effective schools, and training from recognised experts, to help improve the school's practice.

- Funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help eligible pupils to take a full part in school life and benefit, where appropriate, from specific resources and additional help from adults. This has been successful in raising their achievement and their current progress is often above that expected. The good progress being made by these and other pupils is monitored closely by the headteacher and governing body.
- The funding available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities is used effectively. Pupils are taking part in more sporting activities in school and in outside school activities, and this is having a positive impact on their skills and on their well-being.
- The range of topics and subjects promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff are making sure the school is ready for the imminent changes to the way subjects are planned. There is a greater focus on rapidly improving standards in the basic skills. Well-planned enrichment activities, such as the 'shine week' held during the inspection, provide high quality experiences to help pupils develop as learners.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the last inspection the governing body has undergone significant change including an external review of its work. The current governors are having more impact on school improvement.
- The governing body holds the school to account through a range of monitoring activities. Governors are developing their systems for visiting the school and because of this, governors have an improved understanding of the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the system used to determine teachers' effectiveness in enabling pupils to make good progress. Decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities and, where weaknesses have needed addressing, the governing body has been appropriately involved.
- Governors track finances well and are fully involved in decisions about how to spend additional money, such as the pupil premium and sports funding. They ensure safeguarding procedures are in line with regulations in all respects.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 109509 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 441973 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 280 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Field |
| Headteacher | Richard Benson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 November 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01525 374713 |
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