

# Chalton Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	109487
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	377928
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Vivienne McTiffen

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Lower
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carrie Lovering
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Noble
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Luton Road Chalton Luton LU4 9UJ
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<b>Age group</b>	4–9
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	30–31 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	377928



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eight lessons or parts of lessons and one assembly were observed. All three class teachers were seen teaching. The inspector looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read. The inspector talked to pupils and parents and carers and held meetings with staff and governors. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including development plans, information on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance, monitoring systems and safeguarding documentation. Questionnaire responses from 35 parents and carers, 19 pupils and six staff were analysed.

## Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school and caters for pupils up to Year 4. The Nursery and Reception class takes children in the term after their fourth birthday. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Although numbers fluctuate from year to year, about a quarter of pupils are from an ethnic or mixed ethnic background. A small number speak English as an additional language but nearly all are fluent in English. The percentage of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

Since the last inspection in 2008, there have been significant leadership and staffing changes. The acting headteacher became headteacher in September 2009. Two new teachers were appointed in September 2010 and a third teacher joined in September 2011.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school which is improving due to the concerted efforts of the headteacher and the newly-established teaching team. It is not yet good because efforts to raise achievement have been slowed by staffing changes. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Staff know pupils well, promoting personal and academic development, which is greatly valued by parents and carers. One comments, 'The school has helped my son become a well-balanced, happy individual'. Good links with other schools and providers enhance learning and offer experiences the school alone could not provide.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. Work seen during the inspection shows that pupils are making accelerated progress and standards are rising, especially in reading and writing. Much is being done to raise attainment in mathematics but it remains a weaker area.
- Teaching is satisfactory and rapidly improving. Teachers enthusiastically motivate learning. In English and mathematics, work is usually well matched to pupils' ability. This is not always so when pupils use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Teachers are not planning systematically the use of these skills across subjects nor involving all staff in understanding expected outcomes in lessons.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They say they enjoy school and get on well together. One comments, 'I know everyone'. They say they feel safe. Attendance is average and few are persistently late or absent.
- The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has overcome staffing difficulties, built a strong teaching team and promoted staff

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development and good teaching. Formalised monitoring systems, clearly indicating how to improve practice, are underdeveloped. Staff take on management responsibilities but they are not sufficiently involved in development planning. The school successfully involves parents and carers in supporting children's reading but wider involvement is limited.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013 raise attainment in mathematics by:
  - increasing pupils' independence in devising their own methods of working and strengthening mental mathematics skills
  - giving pupils more problem-solving tasks in mathematics and other subjects
  - ensuring pupils are clear about their targets with consistent reference to them in lessons and teachers' marking.
  
- By September 2012 implement strategies to build upon the good start made to improve teaching by:
  - ensuring a good match of work to ability, especially when pupils use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
  - developing a systematic approach to cross-curricular planning
  - ensuring all staff are clear about expected outcomes in lessons.
  
- By September 2012 implement strategies to strengthen leadership and management by:
  - ensuring staff know how to improve through systematic monitoring and well-structured feedback
  - extending the management responsibilities and the involvement of staff in school development planning
  - devising more ways to help parents and carers support their children's achievement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average and progress is satisfactory but evidence from the school's data and from the good teaching seen during the inspection indicates that achievement is rising because progress is accelerating. This view is supported by parents and carers, typified by this comment, 'Since starting here, my child has come on exceptionally well and we are very pleased with this progress in such a short space of time.'

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Attainment on entry varies from year to year. Children usually start in the Nursery and Reception class with abilities below those expected for their age, especially in communication, reading and writing. They make good progress to reach expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. The school's drive to improve reading is paying off. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, the most recent analysis of data shows standards have risen to above average. Pupils say they enjoy choosing from the books on offer, many of which are newly purchased. They read fiction and non-fiction and show good comprehension. Improvements in reading are leading to rising standards in writing. Pupils talk about stories before producing their own. During the inspection, Year 3 and 4 pupils based their work on stories they had read, sharing ideas to develop plots and characters before planning and writing their own exciting stories. Many say they like mathematics best of all because they enjoy the level of challenge. Pupils develop calculation and mental mathematics strategies although, for some, instant recall skills are underdeveloped. They say they enjoy problem-solving tasks. Chances to apply these skills, especially in other subjects, are variable. Pupils have a greater understanding of their targets in literacy than they do in mathematics because teachers make reference to them in lessons and their marking.

Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are at school action level with a very few at school action plus. They make progress in line with their peers because their needs are identified early. They are helped to make small steps towards their learning goals, often working closely with teaching assistants. Pupils from ethnic minority groups and the very few who speak English as an additional language also progress in line with their peers, as do those known to be eligible for free school meals. This is because the school carefully monitors the progress of all groups of pupils and offers support well matched to needs.

**Quality of teaching**

As a result of recent improvements, teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils should achieve. They consistently promote good behaviour, with positive effect on pupils' moral development. Pupils say they learn a lot and parents and carers agree. One comments, 'Both my children love coming to school and their class teacher makes each day interesting, educational and fun'.

In all classes, teachers often provide practical tasks so that pupils learn by doing. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils explored 3D shapes and discovered right angles. Good teaching encouraged pupils to decide on their own working methods and they made good progress in finding out for themselves. This approach is not fully developed in all classes and opportunities are missed to promote independent learning. Teaching assistants play an active role in supporting learning. They are not always clear about the level of support they should offer because they are not fully informed about expected outcomes.

Teachers promote speaking, listening and thinking skills well. They give pupils plenty of opportunities to write for a range of purposes and usually set the right level of challenge. The match of work to ability is not so well defined when pupils use their

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literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Group and partner work promotes social development well and teachers extend pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding in history and art lessons although a systematic approach to planning across subjects is lacking.

Teachers are successfully raising achievement in reading because there is a strong focus on regular reading activities. Frequent sessions linking sounds to letters equip pupils with the skills they need to tackle new words. Parents and carers are fully involved in supporting their children's reading. This level of support is not so well developed in mathematics. Those parents and carers whose children have special educational needs say they feel suitably involved and have good communication with teachers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported in class and small group work, allowing them to develop confidence and work at levels suited to their ability.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are polite and keen to learn. They talk enthusiastically about their work and how much they love their school. Children in the Nursery and Reception class learn to conform to their teacher's expectations. Flexible induction arrangements meet their needs well. Older pupils say they feel well prepared for the move to their next school and recognise the value of belonging to a small school community. All get on well together and all agree that teachers are interested in their views. Pupils take part willingly in performances and respond very well to visitors. For example, during the inspection, a visiting music specialist worked with older pupils in preparation for an inter-schools music festival. Pupils concentrated fully and tried very hard to produce a high-level performance. Pupils accept responsibility very willingly and take their roles as school councillors or helpers very seriously.

Most parents and carers feel behaviour is good and that their children are well looked after. A very small number expressed concern over disruptive behaviour. The inspection found that all pupils respond well to adults and understand the rewards and sanctions to promote good behaviour. While a very small number of pupils say some can be 'silly', all agree they know who to talk to if there is a problem. They remember the importance of values because the school promotes this well. Pupils say they feel safe and parents and carers agree. Pupils sensibly discuss what constitutes bullying or an unsafe situation. They have clear views on cyber-bullying and how the school helps them to avoid it. Incidents of bullying are very rare. If they do occur the school deals with them promptly, involving parents and carers and often addressing issues during assemblies.

Pupils respond well to the school's drive to promote good attendance and are very keen to achieve weekly rewards. Attendance remains average because holidays taken during term time by a small number affect the school's overall percentages.

**Leadership and management**

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The headteacher shows quiet determination in moving the school forward. She has high expectations of what pupils and staff should achieve and recognises individual qualities. She enables professional development through appropriate staff training and links with other schools, leading to shared expertise. She is laying firm foundations for staff to increase their management roles and play a larger part in monitoring the work of the school. Development planning is realistic and sets achievable goals. So far, staff have had little involvement in setting priorities. The headteacher and governing body monitor staff performance through a range of methods. This is not always systematic enough and staff do not receive sufficiently structured feedback about how to improve. Governors, many of whom are new, know the school very well and are highly supportive. They recognise that the systematic evaluation of the school's work is underdeveloped.

Leaders ensure a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes academic achievement and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Trips, visitors, sports and creative pursuits, often supplied through good partnerships, enhance the curriculum and benefit personal development, although leaders do not place a clear enough focus on cross-curricular planning. The school is a cohesive community; attendance and good behaviour are promoted well and discrimination is tackled. Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

Thorough systems check the progress of all pupils, enabling any gaps in performance to be addressed. For example, boys' attainment is improving due to additional resources and motivational tasks. In the Nursery and Reception class, evidence of children's achievement is very carefully compiled in 'Learning Journeys' which clearly show children's development. Because these are not shared with parents and carers, the opportunity is lost to involve them in supporting and understanding their children's learning.

Since the last inspection, the school has shown improvement in key areas, especially in the quality of teaching. This, together with rising standards and accelerating progress, indicates the school is in a suitable position to continue improving.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



1 June 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Chalton Lower School, Luton, LU4 9UJ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed seeing you at work and talking to you. You behave well and say you feel safe. Thank you for filling in the questionnaires. Your answers helped me to find out a lot about your school.

Your school helps you to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics but you are beginning to do even better, especially in reading and writing. You say you enjoy your learning and you are happy to come to school. Your teachers make lessons interesting and know you all well. The school makes good use of partnerships to give you a range of opportunities, including music and sports. To help you all do even better, I have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- help you do better in mathematics by giving you more chance to find your own methods of working and improve your mental mathematics skills; give you more problem-solving tasks; make sure you know your targets and remind you about them in lessons and marking in your books
- make sure you use your literacy and numeracy skills at the right level in other subjects
- make sure teachers find ways to link subjects together and all staff know what you are expected to learn in lessons
- help teachers understand how to improve and involve them in deciding what the school needs to do next
- involve your parents and carers more in supporting your achievement.

I hope these things will help you to make the best possible progress. All of you can help by continuing to behave well and coming to school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen  
Lead inspector

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