

Bromham CofE VC Lower School

Grange Lane, Bromham, Bedford, MK43 8NR

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils get a good start to school life in the Reception classes and make good progress.
- Pupils throughout the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements over the last two years mean that standards are rising in these subjects.
- Teaching is good. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities and the pace of lessons means that all are engaged in their learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They feel safe and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe outside school.
- Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, changes to the way pupils are taught and the rigour with which their progress is checked have improved attainment.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of progress and standards in the school. While being very supportive, they also challenge the senior leaders to ensure that the school continues to get better.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is particularly good and underpins all the school does. The school's development of pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, pupils are too reliant on adults in the classroom to tell them what to do. This means that they do not get the opportunity to find things out for themselves or make decisions about their work.
- Although progress in mathematics is good, it is not as strong as the progress in reading and writing. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to use their skills practically.
- While some marking in books gives pupils clear guidance to the next step in their learning, this is not consistent across the school and pupils do not always have time to respond.
- Some subject leaders have not yet had the opportunity to fully develop their skills in checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in their subject.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, eight of which were seen together with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, three groups of pupils, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers.
- The inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental questionnaires, 13 completed staff questionnaires and individual communications from parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: information from the school's checks on its performance; its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress; school improvement plans; leaders' records of classroom observations; safeguarding arrangements; and records of governing body meetings.
- They also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graham Gossage	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for certain groups, is below average. In this school, it currently applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are all below average.
- The current leadership team has only recently been formed. This is the first year in post for both assistant headteachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - lessons develop pupils' independent learning skills
 - pupils are given opportunities to practise their skills in practical situations, especially in mathematics lessons
 - all marking in books gives pupils guidance as to how they can improve, and they are routinely given the opportunity to respond.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all subject leaders develop the skills to analyse data and the quality of teaching so that they can play a full part in improving teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children typically start school with skills expected for their age. Although, historically, progress in the Reception classes was slower, they are now making good progress. This is because teaching and the range of learning opportunities have improved. Many children are now starting in Key Stage 1 with skills above those expected for their age.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, though progress in mathematics is not quite as good as in reading and writing. The results of the national screening check on how well pupils know the sounds that letters make (phonics) in Year 1 last year were above average. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils confidently used these skills to read unfamiliar words such as 'hurricane' and 'adequate'.
- Progress is equally good in Key Stage 2, though still stronger in reading and writing than mathematics. This means that standards are above average and are particularly high in reading. Pupils leave Year 4 well prepared for their move to the middle school.
- All groups of pupils make good progress. While the attainment of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals is typically a term behind other pupils in both English and mathematics by the end of Year 4, the good progress they are making means that the gap between them is closing. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 2 in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. A large proportion of the pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one or small-group support where it is needed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because support for them is well matched to their specific needs. There is a good balance between additional learning out of the classroom and support to help them work alongside the rest of the class in lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because work is well matched to pupils' abilities and teachers make lessons exciting. For example, Year 3 pupils were fascinated by a scroll, apparently given to their teacher during a visit to 'Harry Potter World', inviting them to create potions to turn their teachers into frogs. They used their mathematical skills to devise different permutations and learnt how to record this systematically.
- In the Reception classes, there is a good balance between outdoor and indoor learning, and activities are planned to develop children's concentration and perseverance. For example, during the inspection, a class listened attentively to the story *The Very Busy Spider* and discussed its features. They sequenced the main events of the story and compared it with traditional tales such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Children confidently share their thoughts and ideas because teachers and other adults are very encouraging and supportive.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In Year 1, following a simple adding and subtraction activity, more-able pupils were able to identify that the answer to 1000, subtract 980 is 20. Teachers regularly assess what pupils understand and use this information to plan the next activities.
- Lessons are well paced so that pupils make the most of the time available. In Year 2, the

teacher periodically stopped the lesson to share good work or remind pupils of the time left, praising those who were making good progress and encouraging all to do their best.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported by well-briefed adults who give sensitive guidance, both in and outside the classroom. Teachers plan activities carefully so that they meet pupils' specific needs and their progress is checked regularly to make sure that the support is continuing to be effective.
- Pupils enjoy the exciting topics such as 'Wild and Wonderful' and 'Chocolate Unwrapped'. Although literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through different subjects and topics, there is not always enough opportunity to apply these skills to practical situations, especially in relation to mathematical problems.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers ask questions which make pupils think deeply about their learning. Occasionally, however, teachers' questions direct pupils too quickly to the answer. On other occasions, pupils wait to be told what to do rather than being encouraged to think for themselves about what they should be doing next or what equipment they may need. This means that pupils become too reliant on adults and do not develop the independent skills that are needed to extend their learning.
- Marking in literacy books is regular and, in most cases, gives pupils clear direction as to how they can improve their work. However, this is not consistent across all classes and subjects and pupils are not generally given time to respond to the guidance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are extremely polite and behave well in and around school. They show respect to adults and consideration for each other. They feel that pupils generally behave well and they all get on well together. The 'buddy system' is highly valued in both playgrounds and pupils say it works well. The buddy system arranges for two pupils from each class to take responsibility for making sure that no-one is left out at playtime, and so they regularly check the 'buddy bench' for anyone who has no-one to play with.
- Pupils understand about physical and emotional bullying. They say it rarely happens in their school and are adamant that any problems are always sorted out by the teachers and other adults. Consequently, pupils feel safe and happy in school. Attendance is above average.
- The school provides pupils with good guidance on how to keep themselves safe. Pupils told the inspectors about staying safe when walking home, in the sun, on the road and when to 'stop, drop and roll' in case of fire.
- Throughout the school pupils are given responsibilities within the class and, as they get older, they take on wider areas of responsibility. For example, Year 3 pupils deliver registers and collect lunch numbers while Year 4 pupils organise the hall for lunchtime and ensure that all is well prepared for assemblies.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. There is rarely any behaviour which disrupts learning, and, if any does occur, it is handled sensitively and well. Pupils are keen to please their teachers but this sometimes means that they wait to be told what to do rather than being given the opportunity to use their initiative.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have improved the system for checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching throughout the school. As a result, the progress of all individuals, and groups of pupils, is regularly checked to make sure that any in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and helped to catch up.
- A new appraisal system has been introduced which has contributed to the improvements in teaching since the last inspection. Judgements of teachers' performance are based directly on how much progress their pupils make and how well they fulfil their different roles in the school. The individual targets set for teachers are used by senior leaders and the governing body to measure whether promotion up the pay scale is justified by results.
- Some subject leaders have not yet had the opportunity to develop these leadership skills. This means that they do not yet play a full part in driving the improvement of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The subjects pupils are taught are exciting and interesting. Topics are well planned to develop literacy, numeracy and communications technology skills through different subjects. The exciting introductions to each topic and activities planned throughout the term are designed to engage pupils and develop their enthusiasm for learning.
- The school rigorously promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination. All pupils are fully involved in activities, and all groups of pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and the school develops spiritual awareness particularly well. This is done through assemblies, such as the 'quiet assembly' where floor candles help create a reflective atmosphere, consistent modelling of appropriate behaviours and responses by teachers and other adults, and the high profile that the school values have throughout school life.
- Pupils from different cultural backgrounds are encouraged to share their experiences. For example, a Muslim boy in the Reception class confidently talked about his religion and how it affected his life, while other pupils have led language sessions and talked about festivals which are important to them.
- The local authority has provided good support. It has worked with the school to help analyse data, improve teaching and learning in the Reception classes, develop leadership skills and provide training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an extremely thorough knowledge of the progress and attainment of groups of pupils throughout the school and ask challenging questions to ensure that the good progress made since the last inspection is maintained and built on. Governors are also very supportive of the school and are passionate that the staff and governing body work as a team to ensure that improvement priorities are achieved. They have excellent systems for checking how well the school is doing and they visit regularly to see for themselves, reporting their visits to the rest of the governing body to ensure that everyone is kept informed. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through headteacher reports and the analysis of pupil progress data. They manage the finances effectively and check that the pupil premium funding is used well to support pupils academically, to provide financial support for trips and to give appropriate pastoral care and support when needed. Governors make sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are fully met.

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	109611
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	405245

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Siobhan Barnes
Headteacher	Virginia Gilks
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2011
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