

# Chalton Lower School

Luton Road, Chalton, Luton, LU4 9UJ

**Inspection dates** 2 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 achieve well, especially in reading and writing, and reach above average standards by the end of Year 4.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and do particularly well in developing their literacy skills.
- Teaching is good and teachers usually make sure that work is neither too easy nor too difficult for pupils.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning and the school is quick to identify pupils who need extra help.
- Most pupils behave well and enjoy school. They are known as individuals in this small, friendly school and this helps them to feel very safe.
- Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved since the previous inspection. This is because the headteacher provides good leadership, and she is supported well by the governing body and by staff with management responsibilities.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although achievement in mathematics is improving, it is not as good as that in English.
- At times, teachers do not provide pupils with practical equipment to help in their recall of number facts or give younger pupils at Key Stage 1 enough guidance with their work.
- The outdoor area and the school's grounds do not contribute as well as they could to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Although behaviour is good overall, there are times when staff do not insist on the best possible behaviour from pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 12 lessons. The inspectors also observed an assembly, looked at playground and lunchtime arrangements, and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, two members of the governing body and a group of pupils. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and six completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team looked at the school's work and at documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school development plan, information relating to safeguarding, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and at pupils' books and learning journals (which contain samples of children's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage).

## Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Macfarlane

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. While pupils from the village of Chalton attend the school, several also come from Luton and Houghton Regis.
- There is an Early Years Foundation Stage class, with one mixed-aged class for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and another for those in Years 3 and 4.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- An average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds but very few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- In some classes, several pupils have joined the school during the year rather than at the usual time of entry.
- There have been some changes in teachers since the previous inspection. The usual teacher of the Years 3 and 4 class is currently on family leave and the headteacher is teaching the class.

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

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, and build on existing strengths in teaching by:
  - making sure that teachers always provide pupils with practical equipment to support their grasp and use of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts
  - providing younger pupils at Key Stage 1 with the key vocabulary they need to be able write about a given topic and making sure that explanations are matched to their level of understanding
  - always insisting on the best possible behaviour from pupils throughout the school
  - developing the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the use of the school's grounds to stimulate children's learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typically below expectations for their age. They make good progress, especially in developing their reading and writing skills. Children's attainment in 2013 was above average by the end of the Reception Year.
- Pupils make good progress in learning about phonics (the sounds that letters make) and in using this knowledge in their reading and writing. The proportion of pupils who meet expectations in the Year 1 phonics check is consistently above average or better. Pupils read confidently and fluently, and show a good understanding of what of they have read.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in standards at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing, where pupils' attainment was above average in 2012 and 2013. Pupils all reached the nationally expected level (Level 2) in reading, writing and mathematics. However, overall standards were only average in mathematics because fewer pupils reached the higher levels.
- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment is high in reading and above national expectations for their age in writing and mathematics. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in writing and some make outstanding progress in reading.
- There were too few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium in 2013 to compare their attainment with that of their classmates without identifying individuals. Pupils who receive support through this additional funding make at least as much progress as the rest of the pupils in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because the school is quick to identify their needs and provides them with effective support. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make good progress and those who arrive in the school at early stages of learning English make rapid progress in learning the language.
- Pupils who join the school during Key Stages 1 or 2 settle in well and make similar progress to the rest of their class.
- The most-able pupils make good progress in reading and writing, and their progress is also good in mathematics in Years 3 and 4. This is because teachers' expectations are high and work is matched well to the next steps in their learning.
- The previous inspection identified the need to raise standards in mathematics. The school has taken a great deal of action to improve the teaching of mathematics and to accelerate pupils' progress. This has begun to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement, and attainment in mathematics is gradually rising across the school. However, staff changes have reduced the impact of training on the teaching of mathematics.
- The fastest progress is evident amongst the older pupils, where some of the most able in Year 4 are already working at the level expected by the end of Year 6 in mathematics as well as in English. Nevertheless, some pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 still find it difficult to quickly recall mathematical facts or to apply their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solving problems.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The school's own records, pupils' books and information about progress over time show that teaching is good. The staff know the pupils very well as individuals and do a lot to boost their self-esteem and encourage them. Pupils say that their teachers are 'helpful and approachable'.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects. Pupils' books show, for example, that they regularly produce lengthy pieces of writing when learning about different topics. Links between subjects bring learning to life and increase pupils' motivation.
- In an English lesson in Years 3 and 4, the teacher made good use of pupils' recent learning about the local area in geography to inform the task of writing an advertisement for an imaginary town or village. This helped pupils in deciding what they might write about and they were quick to get started in planning and drafting their publicity material.
- Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants make good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and push them to think deeply. In the Years 1 and 2 class, older pupils put forward sentences that included good descriptive language in response to the teacher's questioning. In the Years 3 to 4 class, pupils contributed words such as 'palaeontologist' and 'theologist' in work on suffixes, then checked the precise definition of their words in a dictionary.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff have high expectations and children's books and learning journals show that they are making continual progress in linking sounds and letters. Regular opportunities to read to an adult mean that they make good progress with their reading. Children have some good opportunities to develop their mathematical thinking and their physical skills, but the outdoor area does not contribute as well as it could to their overall development.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, receive good support from teaching assistants. Teachers make sure that other adults who work in the classroom are well informed about what pupils are expected to learn.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved. Work in pupils' books shows that tasks are varied and generally matched well to the next stage in their learning. Pupils have good opportunities to solve problems and to find ways of working things out for themselves. However, teachers do not always make sure that pupils have practical equipment to help them with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division although many struggle with recalling number facts.
- Similarly, younger pupils at Key Stage 1 do not always have enough guidance. For instance, when pupils in Years 1 and 2 were asked to write about Florence Nightingale, the teacher did not write key words about the topic on the board or provide the words in any other form for the younger pupils to refer to. In a religious education lesson, pupils in Year 2 made good progress but the younger pupils made slower progress because they needed clearer explanations about some of the vocabulary.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and most behave well. Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good and pupils play harmoniously together. They are polite and courteous, and the atmosphere is friendly. Pupils say that they have 'lots of friends'

and that 'people are nice to each other'.

- Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their learning and are eager to contribute their ideas in class. Where learning is most effective, pupils apply themselves well and produce a good amount of work. They enjoy school and attendance is above average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and they are aware of how to keep themselves safe. They are clear, for example, about the precautions to take when using the internet because they learn about this in e-safety lessons.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying but say that there is no bullying in school, just occasional falling out between individuals. They say that staff soon sort out any problems between pupils and they trust the staff to help them. Records show that bullying is rare and that any incidents are carefully followed up by senior leaders.
- There are good systems in place to enable pupils to settle in quickly when they join the school other than at the usual times of entry. Pupils are well cared for, and support for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and the school provides very good support for pupils when they make the transition to middle school.
- The school's behaviour policy sets out clear procedures to be followed and the system of rewards is popular with pupils. Nevertheless, staff do not always communicate sufficiently high expectations to pupils about behaviour and this leads to some low-level disruption on occasion.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is committed to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to make as much progress as possible. This is reflected in the fact that she has temporarily taken over the teaching of pupils in Years 3 and 4 to keep standards up until the usual class teacher returns. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and staff morale is high.
- The headteacher's checks on teachers' work provide them with clear guidance on how to improve. Half-termly meetings with teachers hold them to account for pupils' progress, and there are effective systems in place for supporting inexperienced staff. Teachers have good opportunities to develop their skills through training, and the headteacher and governors are rigorous in tackling any underperformance.
- The headteacher produces detailed analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. This means that she is quickly able to identify anyone who needs extra help; it ensures that pupils receive equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination.
- In this small school, the headteacher holds leadership responsibility for several subjects at present but other staff who have management responsibilities support her well. For instance, the teacher in charge of the Early Years Foundation Stage provides good leadership. She closely tracks children's progress and ensures that staff keep thorough records of their attainment.
- Productive links with other local schools extend the range of learning opportunities open to pupils and the training available to staff. Partnership with parents is good and parents who expressed their views are highly satisfied with the school's work.

- Topics and subjects meet pupils' academic and personal needs well. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are promoted effectively in a range of subjects. Special events, such as the recent science day, educational visits and residential trips offer additional breadth and depth to learning, and contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is considering becoming a Forest School (where children spend some of their time learning in a natural setting) but the wooded area in the school grounds is currently an underused resource.
- The school is making good use of the primary school sport funding to improve pupils' health and well-being and to develop their sporting skills. Pupils are eager participants in physical activities, and show a good level of accuracy and control. They have good opportunities to represent the school in competitive sport and funding is enabling teachers to increase their skills through working with sports coaches.
- The local authority has provided high quality support for the school and is well informed about its work. The school improvement partner works closely with the headteacher in checking the school's effectiveness and interpreting data, and the local authority has provided support in developing governance and improving the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - There has been good improvement in governance since the previous inspection and governors have benefited from a detailed review of their work. The governing body makes a good contribution to school improvement and is ambitious for its future development. Governors bring valuable skills to their role and are well trained. They are able to speak knowledgeably about the school and have a good understanding of data. This enables them to challenge the headteacher and they carefully check the impact pupil premium spending is having on the progress of pupils for whom it is intended. The governing body ensures that the most effective teachers are rewarded financially and that spending decisions are taken in the best interests of the pupils. They make sure that statutory requirements are met, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109487
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	430735

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<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>	64
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carrie Lovering
<b>Select</b>	Elizabeth Noble
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 May 2012
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