

Camestone Lower School

Jowitt Avenue, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 8NW

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Camestone Lower School has a real 'buzz' of purposeful learning and positive enjoyment.
- The school is well led. The headteacher, other school leaders and governors share a determination to see the school continue to improve.
- Standards from Reception to Year 4 are rising because of improvements in tasks given to pupils and how they are taught.
- Skilled subject leaders drive improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants form an effective team.
- Pupils' progress is good overall and attainment is rising across the school. However, activities given to the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, can lack the challenge these pupils need.
- While most of the school's disadvantaged pupils do well, a few are not making the quicker progress they need to make to catch up with other pupils.
- Regular and thorough checks of pupils' progress ensure that any falling behind are quickly spotted and changes made so they catch up.
- Camestone Lower is inclusive; everyone is treated fairly and equally.
- Pupils' personal development is strong. They enjoy working together and helping one another. The school promotes their happiness, self-esteem and mental health effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They respond positively to the key values and golden rules that permeate every aspect of school life. They say they feel happy and safe at school. Parents agree.
- A small number of pupils are regularly absent from school and this affects their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' planning for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, provides the stretch and challenge these pupils need.
- Ensure that any disadvantaged pupils whose work is lagging behind are given every opportunity to catch up and excel.
- Seek ways to improve the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders, staff and governors share a strong determination to see the school continue to improve. They want the best for all pupils.
- Camestone Lower is an inclusive school. Pupils of all backgrounds and both sexes work and play together harmoniously. The school culture encourages and celebrates effort and good behaviour. Whether reaching top marks or giving someone a helping hand, pupils' achievements and contributions to the school community are encouraged and recognised by staff.
- School leaders accurately analyse the school's strengths and areas for improvement, so they know what works and what does not. Each leader knows what is expected of them, and what they can expect from others. They have complementary skills and, as a team, bring out the best in one another.
- All school leaders participate in the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and give teachers helpful hints to improve. Targets are set, and progress reviewed regularly. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers' and school leaders' frequent analysis of information about pupils' progress enables them to spot pupils falling behind, and adapt their learning quickly.
- The management of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Each pupil's needs are assessed accurately, and funding spent effectively to meet them. The coordinator regularly meets staff to check extra help meets pupils' needs, and changes it if it does not.
- Much is done to support pupils' families. Parents recognise and appreciate the benefit of the family support worker's expertise, and links to local agencies to help them. Leaders and governors strongly believe that pupils' well-being is promoted by the school's timely interventions. One said that 'referrals can take months; we act straight away and can nip problems in the bud'.
- Subject leaders' impact is good. Each individual's expertise is used well, such as in computing, or to give advice and guidance to improve the teaching of phonics.
- Staff morale is high and teamwork is very strong. Staff responding to their survey agreed that they have a clear understanding of the goals the school is aiming to achieve.
- The curriculum effectively engages and enthuses pupils. From 'stunning starts', such as a Year 4 rainforest encounter with exotic spiders and snakes, to 'fantastic finishes', such as Year 3's museum exhibition, pupils enthusiastically dive into learning. Activities outside lessons, including learning Mandarin, further enrich pupils' experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils discuss traits such as 'happiness' and how they can achieve them. Many activities give pupils opportunities to learn with, and from, one another. In Year 4, pupils visit places of prayer from different religions to better understand world faiths.

- Pupils' understanding of British values is good. Topic work is often used to illustrate ideas such as democracy. In everyday school life, staff and pupils exhibit traits such as 'tolerance' and 'respect'.
- Leaders generally spend additional pupil premium funding effectively. Resources are used to promote both the academic and personal development of this group of pupils. However, not enough is done to analyse the precise needs of those pupils whose progress needs to accelerate to make up lost ground.
- Pupils and staff gain from the effective use of the additional funding for primary school sports. Pupils enjoy a wider range of activities, including archery. Teachers learn new techniques by working alongside specialist sports coaches. Pupils' awareness of the importance of exercise to healthy living is strong. Nearly every pupil who responded to their survey agreed the school encourages them to look after their physical health.
- The local authority is supportive of the school, for example advising the school in preparation for conversion to a primary school.
- The school works closely with other local schools, for example to enable teachers to check the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' progress with other teachers.
- Nine in every 10 parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Parents said they like that the school listens to them, for example about homework.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective; the governing body is well organised and tasks are efficiently and effectively completed. Good use is made of each governor's skills and expertise. Termly governors' meetings start with training, so governors' knowledge is kept up to date.
- Governors think ahead. Their active involvement helps shape the future direction of the school. For example, clear plans are in place for the expansion to a primary school.
- Governors use the school's information about pupils' progress well to gain a clear view of how well pupils learn. Information is compared to that from other sources to check it is consistent and governors question school leaders if it is not.
- Governors' regular visits to the school provide an independent view and greater insight into how the school functions.
- Checks made by governors ensure that additional funding, such as pupil premium, is generally used effectively.
- Governors' oversight of the performance of staff, including the headteacher, is rigorous. Independent advice is sought and followed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders, staff and governors see keeping pupils safe as paramount. As a result, everyone plays their part.
- Regular training, undertaken by staff and governors, includes all aspects of safeguarding and their 'Prevent' duty. This training equips staff with the knowledge

they need to detect pupils who are potentially vulnerable so that timely action to intervene can be taken. All staff receive appropriate, timely updates.

- Staff said they are confident in raising any concerns with the designated lead for safeguarding. Effective systems carefully record and note concerns.
- Relationships with outside agencies are strong. Action is taken swiftly to address any concerns and seek help for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Documentation is comprehensive. Checks on the suitability of staff, governors and regular volunteers are thorough.
- During the current building work, all contractors entering the site are checked and staff are vigilant to see that fences remain secure and pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good quality of teaching reported at the previous inspection has been maintained. In their survey, nine in 10 parents agree teaching is good.
- Staff want to improve. With school leaders, they analyse pupils' achievements and agree where change is needed. As a result, standards are rising. They share ideas, such as a 'toolkit' of techniques to engage pupils and 'hook' them into learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. As a result, nearly all lessons run smoothly and learning time is rarely wasted.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They want to learn. They are not afraid to tackle hard work, and see mistakes as learning opportunities.
- During lessons, teachers regularly check that pupils understand what they are to do. If pupils find the task too hard or too easy, appropriate changes are made. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of themselves as learners. During the inspection, one of the most able pupils, realising she did not fully understand, joined another group going over the task with the teacher. Her learning clarified, she quickly and successfully tackled the task. Every pupil responding to their survey agreed teachers make sure everyone understands things.
- Year group teachers plan together effectively, sharing expertise and ideas. They use their helpful 'toolkit' to incorporate techniques to develop learning. Inexperienced teachers particularly say they benefit. Teachers' good use of assessment information and individual targets enables them to assess the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and ensure their good progress. However, some planned activities do not give the most able pupils the opportunity to 'get their teeth into' sufficiently challenging tasks.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively. Teaching assistants' good training, knowledge and expertise enable them to give pupils the help they need to progress.
- Staff promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well. They provide many opportunities for pupils to give their views, listen to those of others, and respond.

- Reading is taught well. Teachers of younger classes particularly take every opportunity to teach and reinforce phonics. More advanced reading skills, such as inference, are taught equally effectively in older classes.
- Writing skills, such as grammar and punctuation, are taught well. From the youngest classes, teachers model the school's handwriting style and expect pupils to follow. Skills, techniques and different writing genres are taught explicitly and then practised in meaningful tasks in other subjects.
- Basic mathematical skills are taught effectively. As a result, pupils calculate accurately and apply their knowledge confidently when figuring out how to solve problems.
- Teachers closely and consistently follow the school's approach so that feedback to pupils gives pupils the help and guidance they need to improve their work. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers provide homework that builds on learning done in school, practises key skills, or helps prepare pupils for future lessons. Pupils said they enjoy the online activities. The school operates a lunchtime club for those pupils who cannot do these at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Nearly every parent responding to Parent View agreed their children are happy at school. Pupils responding to their online survey were equally positive; all said they enjoy school at least some of the time, and half said all of the time.
- Pupils' positive attitudes benefit their learning. They learn to be resilient, to persevere, and the good habits that will help them be successful throughout their school life.
- Pupils accept responsibility willingly. Whether helping to shape the school's direction through the school council, or helping younger pupils in the playground, they are keen to play a part in the life of the school. Nearly every pupil responding to their survey agreed they are encouraged to take on responsibilities.
- The sense of community is strong. In assemblies, pupils are quick to celebrate and acknowledge one another's achievements.
- Leaders and staff actively promote pupils' well-being. Vulnerable pupils benefit from time to reflect and build self-esteem in the sensory room. Staff and governors strongly believe academic progress follows from strong mental health, and pupils need to be happy to learn. 'Brain Awareness Week' looks at learning styles and how to keep the brain healthy. Parents are involved, too.
- Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe is good. Pupils use equipment carefully and move around the school site safely, particularly important during the building works. Computing lessons ensure that pupils know what to do when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Nine in 10 parents responding to Parent View felt the school makes sure pupils are well behaved. The vast majority of pupils responding to their survey strongly agreed their teachers encourage them to be friendly towards other pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved since the introduction of the current approach. They know the rules and usually stick to them. Pupils respond positively to the emphasis on rewards for doing the right thing.
- Leaders monitor all aspects of the school, including pupils' behaviour, closely. They saw a pattern of increasing lunchtime misbehaviour, and took effective action.
- The small number of pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour are well supported by staff. Staff are firm, consistent and encouraging.
- All pupils responding to their online survey said they feel safe in school. Almost all parents responding to Parent View agreed.
- Pupils say bullying happens, but nearly all pupils who completed the survey agreed staff resolve it. Every pupil agreed there is an adult at school they can talk to if something is worrying them. Equally, all parents expressing an opinion in Parent View felt the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Attendance overall is broadly the same as most primary schools nationally. However, a small number of pupils are regularly absent from school, and this can impact adversely on their learning and progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress of pupils currently in the school is good. The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books, show that the vast majority of pupils make good or better progress.
- By the end of Year 4, when pupils have previously left the school, about four in every five pupils have reached or exceeded the age-related expectations for that age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School data and pupils' books show current Year 2 pupils are likely to reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This would be an improvement on the 2016 results. The improvement is largely due to changes to what, and how, subjects are taught. In mathematics, for example, greater emphasis is now given to ensuring that pupils have a thorough grasp of calculation skills. In writing, skills learned in English lessons are practised more frequently in tasks in other subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their differing starting points. They are well supported in their learning. Tasks are carefully matched to their needs, checked regularly to make sure they are working, and changed if they are not.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, generally make rapid progress, particularly when given the opportunity to apply what they already

know to tackle problems. However, some of the tasks teachers plan for them lack sufficient challenge to stretch them.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language do well overall. By the end of Year 4, these pupils achieve as well as their peers. Many of these pupils enter school with little or no English. Although most make rapid gains in English acquisition, this can affect their test scores in their first few years at school.
- Although many disadvantaged pupils make good progress, a few do not make the accelerated progress they need to catch up. This can be for several reasons, including relatively frequent absence from school.
- In the recent past, boys and girls have often achieved very different results. Typically, girls would do better in reading and writing and boys in mathematics. Much has been done to entice all pupils to immerse themselves in learning, whatever the subject. As a result, both sexes now learn equally well in all these subjects.
- Pupils also do well in other subjects. In science, pupils use their good knowledge and understanding to carry out practical investigations, and draw logical conclusions from their results. Computing offers a wide range of tasks so pupils begin to understand the variety of uses of technology. History and modern foreign languages (French and Mandarin) are two other particularly strong subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- Children currently in early years make good progress from starting points that are generally below, or well below, those typical for children of their age. A growing proportion of children enter Reception with little or no English. These pupils often struggle with initial assessments.
- Some children, too, are not 'school ready'. This is sometimes because they have little or no previous experience of working and playing together in a setting. Much emphasis is correctly given in the first few weeks to teaching how to work and play together, for example to share and take turns. As a result, routines are quickly established and understood by children.
- Children currently in Reception do well and the proportion reaching a good level of development is likely to be significantly higher this year than in either of the last two years. This is partly because staff are becoming more skilled at meeting the needs of the changing community. For example, much teaching is now very visual. The school employs a teacher with the expertise to teach key vocabulary and concepts in children's first language, if it is not English, prior to the class lesson. She conducts some checks in this language, too, so results more accurately reflect what these children know and can do.
- Children's learning journals illustrate their low starting points and quickening progress as they move through the year and acquire more skills, knowledge and vocabulary.
- Teaching is good. Every opportunity is taken to develop children's understanding of phonics. Key and subject-specific language is taught well. For example, children confidently describe the characteristics of shapes, such as the number of vertices, using mathematical language confidently and accurately.

- All staff have children's best interests at heart. They work as an effective team to offer each individual the support and encouragement needed. For their part, children concentrate well and respond positively to staff.
- Staff training is effective. For example, the teaching of number and shape, previously perceived as a relative weakness, is now strong and children make good progress.
- Adults support learning well. Their clear and accurate understanding of children and their individual needs enables them to plan and teach appropriate tasks. This year, for example, a growing proportion of children are working at a more advanced level.
- Both inside and out, interesting activities motivate children to be curious and creative. A recent theme was based on the building work. It enthused children.
- All children enjoy equal access to all aspects of the setting. Any barriers to learning are quickly spotted by staff, and extra help provided to remove them. However, while attendance is not statutory at this age, too little is done to get families into good habits. This can be detrimental to learning, such as when children miss extra help vital to their learning. School data shows vulnerable children are particularly affected.
- Leaders' expertise is used effectively, particularly to improve provision and train staff. Staff know and understand their roles and responsibilities, and the systems and procedures they are to use, including those for safeguarding and welfare requirements.
- The relationship with parents is positive. Parents say the arrangements for their children to start school are good. Parents feel staff listen to them. They appreciate the guidance they are given, for example in how to help their children read.

School details

Unique reference number	109462
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10031591

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Surman
Headteacher	Paul Stanyard
Telephone number	01234 855 587
Website	www.camestoneschool.co.uk
Email address	office@camestoneschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- There are two classes in each year group, from Reception to Year 4.
- A little over half of pupils are from White British backgrounds. One pupil in every 10 is from other White backgrounds. The remainder are from other minority ethnic groups.
- Overall, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is about three in every 10. However, this is growing. In Reception for example it is a little more than four in every 10.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.

- The overall proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was undergoing significant building works in preparation for expansion to become a primary school catering for pupils from four to 11 years of age.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or the assistant headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school and site.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 33 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors considered the views of seven members of staff and 18 pupils who responded to their online surveys, and 23 members of staff who completed paper copies of the survey.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.

Inspection team

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James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector

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