

Cauldwell Lower School

Edward Road, Bedford, MK42 9DR

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in Reception, and develop a wide range of skills.
- Teaching is good and there is a determined drive to make it outstanding. Teachers plan lessons effectively and deliver them so that pupils' needs are well met and they make good progress.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and feel that their teachers listen to them and respond to any concerns that they have.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants provide support to small groups of pupils to enable them to make good progress.
- The experienced headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team, sets a clear direction for the school and is rigorously driving forward school improvement.
- The inclusive nature and successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the schools' work.
- The strong governing body holds the school to account and leads its direction well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. The overall quality of teaching leads to progress that is good rather than outstanding.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they are learning or how well they are doing.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is not used consistently across the school.
- Targets which are set for pupils are not yet used effectively throughout the school to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, a number of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to observe one-to-one support and small group booster sessions.
- Inspectors attended a school assembly and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They analysed responses to the school's own parent questionnaire completed in May 2013, along with 14 staff questionnaires. There were no responses available on the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documents and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lucy Maughan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graham Gossage	Additional Inspector
Gillian Broughton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cauldwell Lower School is larger than average and caters for pupils from age four to nine years old.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government for pupils including those eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well-above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide-range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is well-above average.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in school so that all teaching is at least good and more becomes outstanding by:
 - explaining clearly to pupils what they are expected to achieve by the end of each lesson
 - sharing and learning from the good practice that already exists in the school.
- Secure the highest possible outcomes for pupils by sharing good practice seen in some marking so that pupils consistently know how to improve their work and achieve the targets they are set.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children achieve well in the Reception classes. They start school with the knowledge, skills and understanding significantly below those typical for children of this age. A good combination of work led by an adult, opportunities to choose for themselves and careful assessments ensure they make good progress in all areas of learning, leaving Reception with skills below age-related expectations.
- Pupils make good progress in reading during their time in school. They are encouraged to read regularly, both at school and at home, and have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Results of the phonics screening test for Year 1 pupils show an increase of 13% from the previous year.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2012 was below national standards in reading, writing and mathematics with girls achieving better than boys. This gap in achievement has been successfully addressed, with the current Year 2 boys and girls achieving levels that are in line with national expectations.
- Progress in Years 3 and 4 continues to be good particularly in reading and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 4 are currently above those nationally.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress. Current school data shows that these pupils achieved better than other pupils in reading and mathematics, with the gap closing in writing. This is because they are given help that takes full account of their different needs and abilities. Staff successfully promote the self-esteem and confidence of these pupils and this helps their learning and enjoyment of school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils are able to learn and contribute fully, in lessons and when they are withdrawn to work individually or in small groups.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as the other pupils. Some pupils join the school with little or no English. The school works hard to support these pupils so that their progress accelerates in Years 3 and 4.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching throughout the school is good with an increasing proportion being outstanding. However, there is a small amount which requires improvement and school leaders are working hard to improve this.
- In the strongest lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully to engage all ability levels. However, in some lessons teachers do not always make it clear to pupils what they are learning and this can reduce pupil progress.
- Skilled questioning is used well to challenge pupils' learning and provide opportunities for pupils to explain their understanding. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were working in pairs to develop different calculations to reach a particular number. The classteacher asked challenging questions so that the pupils could explain their reasoning and assess how they were making progress.

- Additional teaching staff and teaching assistants are used very effectively to provide high quality support to particular groups. They work hard to develop strong, supportive relationships so that pupils are able to develop and make good progress from their individual starting points. This ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who find learning difficult all achieve well.
- The quality of written feedback and the use of targets to help pupils understand how to improve further are inconsistent across the school. In the best examples, the high quality marking used provides pupils with challenge and ideas on how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school offers a caring, supportive environment where pupils behave well and show respect for themselves and others. Their good behaviour and attitudes have a very positive impact on the school's warm, friendly atmosphere. Only on the odd occasion when teaching does not sustain their interest, is there any restlessness.
- The school makes sure that pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. This includes organised trips and visitors to the school promoting the importance of staying safe. For example, Year 3 pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent trip to 'Hazard Alley' where they were able to observe and react to different issues involving safety.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and they are adamant that it rarely happens. They say that 'name-calling' occasionally occurs, but it is always dealt with quickly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in attendance levels, which have risen consistently in recent years.
- Pupils enjoy responsibilities and take prominent, active roles in the life of the school. For example, through the well-established eco council and school council.
- Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors during the inspection believe that children behave well at school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides a highly effective steer for the schools' work. She leads the school with vigour and determination. She has a sharp eye for what needs improving and manages change well. This helps to create a strong sense of teamwork where all are working towards common challenging goals.
- Leaders show an excellent commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. Their thorough analysis of the achievements of different groups, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils who speak English as an additional language, enables them to quickly provide support to any pupils who are underachieving.
- Teaching is monitored effectively, and the quality of teaching has improved. Processes to manage the performance of teachers are robust and are clearly linked to pupils' progress. Teachers say they feel very well supported and talk highly about the improvements brought about through lesson observations and professional dialogue with other colleagues.

- Effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress at the start of their education.
- Subject leaders lead their subjects highly effectively, regularly checking on provision and standards. They have an accurate view on the strengths within their subjects and how they can improve further.
- The local authority has supported the school well. It has provided accurate and timely monitoring of the quality of provision.
- Safeguarding systems are robust and meet all requirements. These are reviewed regularly by school leaders and the governing body.
- The school has worked hard to secure excellent partnerships with parents, many of whom find accessing school difficult. Their comments to the inspection team and their responses to the school's parent questionnaire were extremely positive, particularly in terms of the school's leadership, the quality of teaching and their children's progress.
- The well-planned curriculum provides pupils with an excellent balance of academic work and creative opportunities. Subjects are linked well together in meaningful ways to bring learning alive. For example, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils were undertaking art, history, geography and literacy work based around the theme 'Ships and Shipwrecked'.
- The strong emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills underpins all aspects of school life. Pupils show a keen awareness and consideration for other cultures and faiths. For example, pupils spoke highly of the 'language' assemblies that are held to help them learn about other countries, the culture and the language that is spoken.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate view of how well pupils are doing and how the school can improve further. This is gained through regular visits, meetings with the headteacher and staff and observations of lessons. They also use data well to compare how well pupils are doing compared to all pupils nationally. As a result, governors hold the school strongly to account for standards and achievement. They monitor the performance of teachers well and understand that rewards are for successful outcomes of pupils' achievement. Statutory duties are met and financial management is very secure. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding benefits relevant groups. Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully understood, met and regularly reviewed.

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	130326
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	412583

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Knapp
Headteacher	Judith Apps
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
Telephone number	01234 301400
Fax number	01234 301401
Email address	schooloffice@cauldwell.org.uk

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