

Brickhill Lower School

Dove Road, Brickhill, Bedford, MK41 7AA

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other leaders work well together to ensure that the quality of teaching, achievement and behaviour are good and continue to improve.
- Governors regularly check the work of the school. They support and challenge school leaders and strive for excellence in all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They get on well together and are keen to learn.
- Pupils are kept safe and well cared for. Consequently, they feel safe and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers usually plan challenging activities to enable pupils to learn successfully in a bright, stimulating environment.
- Pupils make good and, sometimes, rapid progress through the school. They attain above-average standards at the end of Year 2 and maintain these standards in Years 3 and 4, especially in reading.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the previous inspection. Children are inquisitive and apply themselves to a wide variety of stimulating activities. They make good progress and are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- The good range of learning opportunities makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps prepare them for life in modern British democratic society.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding enough to ensure all pupils make excellent progress, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 2. Occasionally, pupils spend too much time on work that is too easy.
- Pupils are not consistently given opportunities to learn from their mistakes and improve their work.
- Improvement plans are not fully focused on how intended actions will ensure all pupils make rapid progress.
- Some subject leaders do not check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement closely enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons. They also observed groups of pupils being taught early reading skills and others receiving support in small groups. Some of these observations were shared with the headteacher. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons, looked closely at their books and listened to them reading.
- Inspectors met two groups of pupils, and spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, including the Chair of the Governing Body and seven other governors, as well as with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school. They examined several documents concerning pupils' achievement and progress, development plans and information about teachers' performance. They also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Minutes of governing body meetings were considered.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. They considered the 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Margaret Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This lower school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with the remainder coming from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is the same as that found nationally. Very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- About one in five pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care). This proportion of pupils is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the school is about one in five. This proportion is above average.
- A very small number of pupils experiencing behavioural difficulties attend part-time alternative provision at Greys Education Centre, Bromham, the local authority's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises two Reception classes which children attend full time.
- The school works in partnership with nursery schools, other lower schools and middle schools.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher took up her post in September 2012 and almost all governors are new in post.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that more pupils make excellent progress, especially in mathematics in Years 3 and 4, by making sure that:
 - all pupils, especially the most able, are consistently given work that challenges them to achieve highly
 - pupils always respond to feedback and guidance from teachers so that they learn from their mistakes
 - pupils have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - all improvement plans make clear how intended actions will increase pupils' rates of progress
 - subject leaders receive additional training and opportunities to check and improve the quality of teaching and achievement in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and assistant headteachers lead with calm determination and purpose. They are well supported by governors and subject leaders. As a result, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have continued to improve and are sometimes outstanding. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved and attendance has risen to be above the national average for primary schools.
- Leaders tackle any issues of discrimination well. This contributes to the harmony in the school community where pupils of all ethnic heritages get on well together. Teachers receive good quality training to help them improve their practice and expectations of good behaviour are high. These demonstrate that leaders create a culture and ethos where both pupils and teachers can thrive.
- Senior leaders closely check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. They ensure teachers and teaching assistants receive good training and constantly hold staff to account for the progress of their pupils. Any underachievement is addressed by providing pupils with extra help should they need it. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. Their success demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all.
- Leaders have a thorough understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve. Detailed action plans are designed to address the key priorities for development. However, plans are not sharp enough in precisely linking intended actions with pupils' more rapid progress and higher achievement.
- Subject leaders benefit from working together with leaders in other schools to plan and implement the new National Curriculum. They share their expertise with their colleagues in the school to help them prepare learning in a range of subjects. However, subject leaders sometimes lack the time and leadership training to help them check the work of other teachers in order to make teaching outstanding and raise pupils' achievement further.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. As a result, it has a positive impact on narrowing the gap between the standards they reach and those of other pupils.
- The primary school sports funding is used well to extend the range of sports offered and increase the expertise of staff. There are now more opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sports clubs and to compete against other schools. As a result, more pupils are increasing their physical fitness, health and well-being.
- The local authority provides good support to school leaders, including governors. This support has helped leaders identify the right priorities for improvement so that all changes benefit the school.
- Leaders' monitoring of the very few pupils attending alternative provision is good. They thoroughly check pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. They frequently liaise with staff and other external agencies about the pupils involved. The school's use of alternative provision ensures that pupils have the support that best meets their needs.
- The procedures to keep pupils safe and secure meet statutory requirements. Leaders make sure that record keeping of all safety and safeguarding matters is thorough and staff are well trained in safeguarding pupils.
- The school's new range of learning opportunities provides pupils with necessary and interesting activities for learning in all subjects, promoting their interest and positive attitudes towards their work. Learning is enhanced through visitors and visits, such as the recent Year 2 trip to a local castle, which extended pupils' understanding of mediaeval chivalry.
- Learning opportunities give pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions – such as through the

Year 4 'faith tour'. British values are promoted well, including understanding of democracy through roles on the school council, respecting school rules and raising money for charity. In this way, the school successfully helps pupils to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body brings a wide range of skills and uses them effectively to check the work of the school. Governors hold leaders to account for the school's performance and demand continual improvement.
- Governors visit the school regularly and check progress against planned actions in the school development plan. They have not ensured, however, that planned actions make it clear how these will ensure all pupils make rapid progress.
- Members of the governing body are well informed about the quality of teaching. Through a robust performance management system, they make sure that any underperforming teachers are given effective support to improve their practice. They make sure that teachers' salary increases are justified by their success in enabling pupils to achieve well. Governors review targets for the headteacher in determining her pay.
- Governors regularly analyse and interpret information on pupils' progress and attainment so that their questioning of leaders is better informed about school performance.
- Governors use funding well. They check the impact of the pupil premium funding is well directed in the interest of eligible, disadvantaged pupils and that they benefit as intended
- The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations, including for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They welcome visitors with respect, politeness and curiosity. Pupils of all social and ethnic backgrounds get on well together, making the school a harmonious community.
- Pupils treat the school environment with respect and ensure that it is free from litter. They move around the school sensibly and behave well at social times. If pupils are lonely at break time they stand at the 'buddy stop' and, very quickly, other pupils invite them to join in their games.
- The school provides great support to individual pupils who have difficulties in behaving well. This support includes working closely with families, external agencies and, when appropriate, arranging alternative provision. This support effectively helps those pupils modify their behaviours.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils' positive attitudes help them learn well. Just occasionally, when teaching does not fully engage some pupils, there is loss of concentration. These situations are usually dealt with effectively as the new behaviour management policy is understood by pupils and applied consistently by teachers.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe. They are confident that an adult in the school will help them to resolve any concerns. Access to the building is secure and all staff are closely checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils know how to keep safe in different situations. Through the Year 3 visit to 'hazard valley', for instance, they learn how to stay safe from dangerous situations, such as: road, rail, fire, electricity and when using the internet.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. They say bullying is rare but, if it does occur, it is dealt with directly.
- The school manages risk very well with a range of assessments that help to ensure the safety of pupils both on-site and during visits. Safety and safeguarding provision is good, but otherwise unremarkable.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, all groups of pupils make good and sometimes even more rapid progress to achieve well in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Teachers plan interesting and exciting activities that motivate pupils to learn successfully. Teachers and other adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond well. Teachers ensure that classrooms are attractive and orderly. As a result, pupils arrive punctually to lessons, ready to learn and try their best.
- Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to apply their literacy skills across subjects other than English. This approach helps them to make good progress in literacy and in different subjects. The quality of their writing is enhanced and their reading further encouraged.
- Reading is well taught. Pupils' good progress in reading is supported by a wide range of books which are used in school and also to encourage parents to read daily with their children. Any pupils experiencing difficulties receive support. A love of reading is further encouraged by visits by authors and poets.
- Teachers give pupils some opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in different subjects and this supports their good progress. However, in Key Stage 2 in particular, progress is not always rapid because pupils sometimes lack learning resources and the opportunity to apply their competent mathematical skills in solving problems. Consequently, they do not reinforce their mathematical skills as well as they could or make even more rapid progress.
- Teachers frequently assess how well pupils are learning. They work well with teaching assistants to use assessment information on how well pupils are progressing to plan support for those who find learning more difficult. These pupils include the disadvantaged, the disabled and those who have special educational needs. The help provided both in and outside the classroom ensures that all pupils learn well and make good progress.
- The work set is not always demanding enough to challenge pupils to learn as well as they can. As a result, some pupils, including some of the most able, do not make more rapid progress or reach the highest standards of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics in Years 3 and 4.
- The school's recent drive to improve the quality of marking ensures that teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They usually give pupils useful feedback that helps them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve to meet their targets. However, teachers do not consistently give pupils opportunities to respond to the guidance given. Consequently, pupils do not always correct and improve their work and make better progress to reach higher standards.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points in Reception. They attain above-average standards at the end of Year 2 and sustain this level of performance in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils make good progress and, overall, attain standards by the end of Year 2 that are consistently above average. For example, in 2014, standards attained were above average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment was particularly impressive in mathematics, where the proportion attaining the higher Level 3 and above was well-above the national average.
- School data show that most pupils by the end of Year 4 in 2014 achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. Some made rapid progress from their starting points in Year 3. Most reached standards that are usually found by the end of Key Stage 2. Reading was particularly strong. Inspection evidence confirmed similar strengths in the current Year 4.

- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Gaps in attainment between them and others in the school and between them and all pupils nationally are narrowing. In the 2014 national assessments at the end of Year 2, disadvantaged pupils were about four months behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to all pupils nationally, the in-school gap in attainment was halved. The profile of performance of disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 4 is similar to that in Year 2. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and achieving well.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Staff training in the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) ensure that early reading skills are well taught. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national screening check for phonics in 2014 rose to be above average. As a result, most pupils achieve well.
- Progress in writing is good. Pupils write extensively in English and in other subjects so they can apply their skills for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Teachers have made it a priority this year to encourage pupils to initially discuss what they intend to write and broaden their vocabulary on the topic before starting to write. As a result, the quality of writing is improving and more pupils are making faster progress.
- Pupils make good and often rapid progress across Key Stage 1 in mathematics. Progress across Key Stage 2 is slower because pupils do not have enough opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. Material resources to help them deepen their understanding and apply their skills more widely are limited.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. They do so because they receive well-focused support to address their individual needs.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. This is because the school tracks their progress carefully and skilled teachers and teaching assistants provide them with effective support in lessons and in small groups to ensure their language skills improve rapidly where necessary.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. For example, in 2014, they attained well-above average standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1. However, although the most able continue to achieve well in reading and writing through Key Stage 2, progress in mathematics slows because these pupils are not always set challenging work to stretch their abilities to the full.
- The very few pupils studying off-site are well supported to help them modify their behaviours so that they are able to learn well and make good progress.

The early years provision is good

- Good leadership has improved the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. Leaders ensure that there are close links with the nursery schools from which children transfer. Arrangements ensure that children make a smooth transition to Reception.
- Staff work extremely well together to track children's progress and plan activities to meet their needs and interests. Parents are encouraged to extend their children's learning at home. Consequently, they are able to contribute frequently to records of their children's learning and progress. The combined approach of school and home ensures that children's achievement improves.
- Children join Reception with a range of skills typical for their age. All children, including the vulnerable, those who have special educational needs and those for whom the school receives additional funding are well supported to make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The few children who are at an early stage of learning to speak English receive additional speaking and listening support in a small group from an experienced teaching assistant. They quickly gain confidence in

using English.

- The quality of teaching is good. Consequently, the proportion leaving Reception with a good level of development, well prepared for entry to Year 1, is above average – but not yet high. Teachers and other adults are well trained and have a sound understanding of how children learn. They are well deployed to make sure all children achieve well in all areas of learning. They readily organise stimulating learning resources to interest the children.
- Children work in a positive and engaging atmosphere in bright and stimulating outdoor and indoor classrooms that provide a wide range of resources to support their learning. Children respond by becoming inquisitive and successful learners.
- The learning environment is safe and caring. Children are well motivated, productive and work well with each other. The Early Years Foundation Stage makes a strong contribution to children’s physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, as well as to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	109503
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	448379

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Farrer
Headteacher	Debbie Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2010
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