

Cople Lower School

Willington Road, Cople, Bedford, MK44 3TH

Inspection dates 18–19 September 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils enter the Reception class with skills typical for their age, and leave the school at the end of Year 4 with above average skills, knowledge and understanding for their age.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in English and the proportion of pupils making good progress in mathematics is rising.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and are well prepared for their move to Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers develop good relationships with their pupils which helps them to be confident learners.
- Pupils behave very well in the classroom and around school. They are happy, confident and say they feel safe. They like their school.
- All staff are keen to raise standards. They feel well supported in their professional development and they achieve the goals set for them.
- The Headteacher provides good leadership. She creates a harmonious working atmosphere that improves teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Governors provide the right balance of challenge and support to help the school continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding because work is not always planned specifically for all groups, particularly the more-able pupils, so that they achieve as much as possible.
- Occasionally, staff do not alter tasks effectively part-way through lessons to make sure that all pupils have demanding work throughout the lesson.
- Although closing, there remains a small gap between the attainment of pupils who receive extra government funding and that of their peers.
- While leaders and governors have improved the way they monitor pupils' progress, they do not always react rapidly enough to support groups in danger of falling behind.

Information about this inspection

- The Inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, six of which were joint observations with the headteacher. All classroom teachers present during the inspection were observed teaching at least twice.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- The inspector heard pupils read and discussed with them their reading skills and personal reading record.
- Pupils' work was sampled, the school's tracking records of pupils' progress scrutinised, and account taken of the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, and other documents and policies.
- The views of parents and carers were sought during the two days. A letter received and 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were examined.
- The views of staff were sought through a questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average primary school.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and fewer pupils than average are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all below average.
- A very small number of pupils are supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium. This is extra funding provided for certain groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers make full use of assessment information in the planning of lessons so work is suitably challenging for all groups of pupils, particularly those capable of reaching higher levels
 - teachers adjust tasks more quickly, if necessary, so that pupils have sufficiently demanding work throughout all lessons.
- Raise achievement by further closing the gap between the few pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and other pupils of the same age by reviewing their progress more regularly and adjusting support accordingly.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that leaders check the achievement of the different groups of pupils more rigorously, and act quickly to support any who are in danger of falling behind.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school in Reception with skills that are typical for their age. They leave the school in Year 4 having made good progress, reaching standards that are above the levels expected for their age in mathematics and English.
- Children make a good start in Reception, particularly in learning letters and the sounds they make (phonics). As a result, the outcomes of the 2013 phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1 were well above those found nationally. This is a significant improvement on the previous year's results.
- Pupils progress well in reading. By the time they leave most pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and of all abilities, read well and have a genuine interest in a wide range of books. One Year 4 pupil enthused about his books; 'Zak gets new powers in each book and he is going to search for his grandad!' without recognising how well the books give him 'new powers' to read. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and particularly enjoy using the new resources.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 in English and mathematics has been above average for three years. Assessment information shows a dip in 2011 due to more pupils than usual with special educational needs in the small Year 2 group. While they made good progress, they did not all reach the expected standards for their age. In 2013 pupils achieved well with more pupils than average reaching the expected levels for their age. However, not all the more-able pupils reached the higher levels that they were capable of in English and mathematics.
- Boys and girls now achieve equally well, which is an improvement on last year when girls did not do so well in mathematics. However, a few more-able pupils do not always make the rapid progress of which they are capable because activities to challenge them and deepen their learning are not always effectively planned.
- The very small number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium benefit from the additional support for learning that the funding provides. The gaps are closing between these pupils' attainment and that of the other pupils, in all ability groups, in both English and mathematics and especially in reading. The school has recently increased the focus on supporting this group to help gaps close completely in both subjects.
- Additional adult support is effective in enabling disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to be fully involved in lessons. This, and the additional help they get out of class, enables them to acquire skills and make progress at the same rate as their friends.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because there is a varied range of activities, both indoors and outside, that captures children's interests. They enjoy themselves and develop skills quickly, such as improving their physical development on the climbing equipment, and their knowledge of the world when they experiment carefully with tubes and balls. Children are well prepared for moving to Year 1, and are well equipped with a good understanding of letters and sounds, and numbers, shapes and measurement.

- Strengths in teaching are found in the very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, who explain things well. Pupils' speaking and listening skills benefit from frequently being able to discuss their ideas in groups and explain their answers to the whole class. Occasionally adults do not intervene or change the task swiftly when activities are not demanding enough and some planning does not ensure that all groups are challenged in every lesson, which causes learning for a few to slow down.
- Teachers and other adults engage pupils well in learning through fun and interesting activities. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their work and learning. They want to do well, work hard and so make good progress. In a Year 1 and 2 science lesson, for example, pupils were given plenty of opportunity to explore the characteristics of materials through touching and discussing them and then went on to develop effective ways to record this.
- All lessons starts with sharing a learning objective so that pupils know the purpose of the lesson. However these are occasionally about what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. This prevents pupils from knowing what to strive for, and whether they have learned what was intended. While work is marked regularly pupils are not consistently given time to consider how to improve it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and school records show that this is typical. Pupils say there is very little bad behaviour or bullying and that staff quickly deal with any problems. Parents and carers who responded on Parent View or who were spoken to at the school gate confirmed that, overwhelmingly, they are very happy with the school, behaviour is good and teachers are happy to respond to any concerns swiftly.
- High quality behaviour and a mature attitude to classroom work help all pupils from the youngest to the oldest to apply themselves well to learning. As a result, they make good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe and keep safe as they move around the school. They use resources and equipment safely. They know what situations might be risky and how to handle or avoid them. Pupils are kind and helpful towards others and are polite and courteous to adults and visitors. They support others who might feel lonely or sad, especially if they are new to the school.
- The pupils' good behaviour, their developing understanding for other people through their 'Rota-kids' charity programme and their respect for those who may be different show how well the school caters for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now average. Parents are reminded frequently about the need for good attendance but a few pupils are still absent too frequently.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors and staff have high expectations for the school and share an ambitious aim for it to become outstanding. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher generates enthusiasm among the staff for improving the school while providing nurturing high quality care and stimulating educational activities. She is at the heart of an effective and caring staff team.
- Staff and governors contribute to the school's improvement plan which focuses on appropriate

areas for action. There is a growing link between pupils' progress, the management of teachers' performance and the improvement priorities. Staff training and the allocation of responsibilities are used well to develop the staff's skills and their leadership and management capabilities. This, along with increasingly rigorous and regular use of assessment, is helping to improve pupils' progress.

- Recent improvements in the rigour of termly checks on progress enable leaders and managers to be clearer about the progress individuals and groups of pupils are making. However, occasionally, where a pupil falls behind, this is not acted on rapidly enough to speed up their progress quickly.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the way it helps children to be 'excited about ... learning and wanting to find out more'. They appreciate being able to talk to staff when they need to and are confident in the headteacher's leadership of the school.
- The school offers a broad range of subjects, and the classrooms and corridors reflect this in the vibrant displays of pupils' work. Throughout the school, subjects are appropriately planned and well designed to reflect pupils' age, interests and needs. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils take a lively interest in other cultures. Their contacts with schools across the world through the Rotary Club support this interest well. They are very clear about what is right and wrong through the staff's careful support for this aspect. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development well.
- The school is already anticipating the use of the new national funding for promoting primary school sport. It has begun to link with a local partnership which provides training to improve the teaching of physical education. Pupils are also being entered into competitive, inter-school tournaments and evaluation of the benefits of these activities is a part of this plan.
- The local authority has provided appropriate support during the last academic year. The school has benefitted from this additional external support and the professional links to other groups and schools arranged by the linked adviser, for example, by increasing staff members' subject knowledge and lesson observation skills.
- The school ensures that pupils are well safeguarded and that those who work with them are checked for their suitability to work with children. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet, and the school has made this a useful priority.

The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school well and visit regularly to see new developments for themselves, talk to pupils, sit in on lessons and look at books. The governing body receives regular updates on all pupils' attainment and progress. It is aware of how pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding are supported. However, they do not always challenge leaders about progress or hold them to account for narrowing any gaps that might be evident quickly enough. The governing body is effectively informed about performance management and how the senior leaders are supporting improvements in teaching. It ensures that pay awards are linked to good performance and the evidence that teachers teach well. It also ensures that safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

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	109442
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	425417

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	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Howard
Headteacher	Helen Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2010
Telephone number	01234 838827
Fax number	01234 838827
Email address	coplelower@schools.bedfordshire.gov.uk

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