

# Carlton VC Lower School

The Moor, Carlton, Bedford, MK43 7LP

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The achievement of pupils is outstanding. During their time at school, they make excellent progress and reach very high standards in their work.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good. Based on high expectations, teachers plan lessons which pupils find exciting and highly enjoyable.
- All staff, including teaching assistants, know the pupils exceptionally well. As a result, learning activities are very well matched to the abilities of each individual pupil.
- Pupils are usually encouraged to think for themselves and learn by doing things for themselves, although on occasion such opportunities are reduced because the teacher talks a little too much.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school are excellent. Pupils get on very well together and their relationship with all adults in the school is superb.
- Parents and pupils have very positive attitudes towards school. Parents agree that the school is very well led and managed and they would not hesitate to recommend the school to another parent.
- The school places great emphasis on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school is outstandingly well led by its head teacher and senior teacher, who have driven improvements forward rapidly and to great effect.
- Staff work exceptionally well as a team that has a clear and relentless focus on improving outcomes for all pupils attending the school.
- The governing body supports the school exceptionally well. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Their knowledge and dedication contribute significantly to the achievement and success of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, two of which were joint observations with the head teacher. He also scrutinised the work of the pupils, and listened to a number of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school improvement plan, monitoring files, minutes of governors' meetings, data on pupils' past and current progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). He also considered the 14 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Ronald Cohen, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized school of its type. It operates three mixed-year classes (Reception/Year1, Years 2/3 and Years 3/4).
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs and are supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has received many awards. In the last three years, these have included: Primary Science Quality Mark, Green Flag Eco Award, International Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award and Basic Skills Award.
- A privately run pre-school operates on site. The pre-school is subject to a separate inspection and the latest report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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

- Ensure that on the rare occasions where lessons are good rather than outstanding, teachers do a little less talking, thus giving pupils more time for independent learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- In recent years, children have entered the Reception class with skills and knowledge below those expected of their age, particularly in the areas of social and emotional development and speech and language.
- The strong relationship with the pre-school means that the staff of the school get to know many of the children who will be joining the Reception class. This helps to smooth the move of the children into the school, so there is no time lost once they start school.
- During their time in the Reception class, children make excellent progress. This is due to the dedicated staff who work exceptionally hard to ensure that children are happy, confident and active learners. Children make huge strides forward in all areas of their development so that by the time they move into Year 1, their skills and knowledge are broadly above average.
- This excellent progress continues in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are significantly above average.
- In Years 3 and 4, these successes are built on even further. The school's own assessment data for recent years indicate that the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 with levels which are already as high, and sometimes higher, than those generally attained by pupils who are two years older. The school's tracking of the current Year 4 and Year 3 cohorts suggest that these high levels are continuing, and this was confirmed by inspection evidence.
- Pupils' reading is particularly well developed. They quickly learn to recognise the link between letters and sounds (phonics) so that they enjoy learning to read, which they do regularly with their teachers and at home. Parents play a significant role in fostering their children's love of books by listening to them read, and commenting about their reading in their reading diaries. Pupils' progress in reading is monitored rigorously.
- Pupils' writing was an area for development in the last report. Writing standards in all years have improved so that their writing is expressive and they use to good effect a much wider vocabulary than is expected from pupils of their age.
- All pupils do well in mathematics, but particularly girls, whose growing confidence enables them to tackle complex and challenging problems.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve exceptionally well. A significant number of these pupils enter the school later than the normal starting point and the school has a good record of success in enabling them to make progress at the same rate as their peers. This is due to the nurturing nature of the school; the carefully planned activities, and their implementation by dedicated staff.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium achieve equally as well as their peers. Funds are used well to provide additional resources and targeted support. As a result, these pupils progress exceptionally well in all subjects and attain standards which are above those expected.
- Information from the online questionnaire (Parent View) show that parents agree that their children achieve well at this school.

**The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- The quality of teaching is outstanding across all areas of the school. Relationships between all pupils and staff are caring and supportive. This underpins the smooth running of lessons. Teachers work exceptionally hard to ensure the learning environment is stimulating. Displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate pupils' work, such as examples of creative writing.
- Teachers plan lessons very well. They use probing questioning to check pupils' understanding and to push their learning even further. The pace of lessons is brisk. Whether pupils are working alone or in groups, work is set at the correct level for their needs. This includes extension work for the more-able pupils which enable them to reach even higher levels.
- Pupils are well aware of their targets. These are closely monitored by teachers. Work is marked frequently and offers clear analysis of what pupils have done well, but equally tells them what to do in order to improve.
- Teachers have very high expectations of the pupils, and set challenging but stimulating and interesting tasks for them. They have created an atmosphere which is conducive to learning. As one pupil told the inspector, 'It is always OK to try out your own ideas because, even if you get it wrong, we can work on that in order to get it right'. This philosophy pays great dividends in terms of the pupils' independent learning skills, and their 'have a go' attitude.
- In the small number of lessons which were good but not outstanding, teachers spent a little too long talking to the pupils. This left them insufficient time for activities planned to develop their independent learning skills.
- Teaching assistants are very well deployed and contribute significantly to pupils' high achievement. They work very closely with class teachers to ensure that pupils are able to build carefully on their current understanding. They are used particularly well during plenary and 'mini- plenary' sessions, when the checking of learning takes place.

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

- Pupils feel very safe at school, and they are keen to learn. They strive to do their best at all times and were seen to relish the challenge of hard work.
- Pupils are exceptionally polite, courteous and welcoming. They are aware of the rewards and the sanctions which operate, and are articulate about the standards of behaviour expected of them.
- Older pupils help younger pupils in both formal and informal roles. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger children at breaks and at lunch times. Pupils are very kind to each other. For example, at one moment in the morning, an older pupil helped a younger one with his coat because 'I just saw him struggling and that he needed help'.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the different forms that bullying can take. They say that incidents of bullying are extremely rare, and if it did happen 'it would get sorted out'. The school also takes positive steps to ensure that the children are aware of internet dangers. Parents agree that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

- Attendance rates are good, and children arrive on time.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The school has improved substantially since the last inspection. The headteacher has fully accomplished the areas identified for development in the last report.
- The headteacher's introduction and promotion of phonics (the sounds letters make) has had a profound and positive impact on attitudes to and outcomes in reading. Similarly, literacy teaching has been reinforced by the introduction of creative approaches to writing which enthuse pupils, including reluctant writers, particularly boys.
- The leadership of the school is characterised by clear vision, practical attention to detail, and well distributed roles and responsibilities, with priorities underlined in the school development plan. This adds up to clarity of purpose, with impact shown in the outstanding results that pupils achieve.
- Staff work very well together as a close-knit team. Morale is extremely high and responses to the Ofsted questionnaire show that staff are very proud to work in the school. All staff have a high regard for the headteacher and all agree that the school is exceptionally well led and managed.
- Systems to check the quality of teaching are rigorous. Strong emphasis is put on professional training to keep teachers abreast of new developments which will enhance the success of the pupils. Teachers' effectiveness is clearly linked to their pay and career progression.
- The school's procedures to track the performance of all pupils, and to intervene and support or, indeed, extend any pupils who appear to need it, are excellent.
- The school's outstanding achievement is underpinned by an excellent curriculum which is broad and balanced. It gives meaningful opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. The sensitive way in which the curriculum is adapted to meet identified needs was shown in a 'girl-friendly' approach to technology and the mathematics that underpins it. Its impact was immediately visible in girls' attitudes and achievement.
- The curriculum also provides many additional pursuits both within and beyond the school day, such as French, visits to museums and castles, special days, and a range of clubs, which embrace such diverse interests as music, art, martial arts, and ECO activities. These, together with visits to and from the church and places of religious worship of other faiths, create a curriculum which makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority recognises the outstanding features of the school, and uses it as an exemplar of outstanding practice for other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body makes a significant contribution to the leadership of the school. The Chair of Governors is very well informed about all aspects of the school, especially the quality of teaching and the progress the pupils are making. The governors are involved in setting ambitious targets for the headteacher and other staff, which are linked to pupils' progress and recommendations for pay awards. Appropriate training is undertaken by governors to support them in their role. Governors are linked to academic aspects of the school so that they gain detailed knowledge of the progress made by pupils as they move through the school. The governing body ensures that pupil premium funding is spent appropriately and its impact is closely monitored. Governors

ensure that safeguarding meets statutory requirements and that the school budget is managed effectively.

## 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>	109610
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	403092

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	73
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Tuohy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Burt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2008
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