

The Bellbird Primary School

Link Road, Sawston, Cambridge, CB22 3GB

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 two headteachers have a clear vision for how successful the school can be. Together, they have led a series of successful initiatives that have improved attendance, the quality of teaching and standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most pupils now make good progress in all aspects of the curriculum, across the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Governors hold the school to account well. They provide high levels of challenge and support. Through regular visits to the school, they have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development.
- The curriculum promotes British values effectively. Tolerance, respect and an understanding of the role of democracy are developed well through a wide range of activities.
- Children make a good start in the early years. They settle in well and make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. Thorough planning, probing questioning by teachers and effective use of assessment all help pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use their marking of pupils' books well to plan the next steps in learning.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the friendly staff and the regular invitations to see the children celebrate their achievements.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds, and particularly those who speak English as an additional language, get on well together and make good progress.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have good attitudes to learning and behave well around school.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupil safe are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as strong as it is in reading or mathematics.
- Too few of the most able pupils reach the highest levels, especially in writing.
- Particularly in writing, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough and adults within the classroom are not always used effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 12 lessons and looked at a range of pupils’ work. Most of the observations were undertaken with one of the headteachers.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils were observed in lessons, assembly, break times, the lunch hall and when they moved around school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection, during lessons and at break times. In addition, there was a longer discussion with a group of eight pupils aged 7 to 11.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors listened to older and younger pupils read. They discussed with pupils their choice of books and how reading is encouraged in school.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation, including the school’s own attainment and progress records for all year groups currently in the school. They looked at the published information on pupils’ attainment and progress and a range of other documents, such as the school’s development plan, its self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to pupils’ safety and welfare, including security checks on staff and recruitment procedures. Behaviour logs and attendance records were also scrutinised.
- The inspectors took account of 49 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as carrying out informal discussions with parents. The views of staff were taken into account through discussions and the 22 responses to a staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Duncan Ramsey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Keelan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- Two joint headteachers share the leadership of the school.
- About 70% of pupils are White British. This is in line with the national average. The remaining 30% come from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. New arrivals into the school often have little or no experience of English when they join. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than that found in most schools. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve
 - setting more challenging whole-school targets
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their higher-order writing skills.
- Improve teaching and learning so that more of the most able pupils make rapid progress and reach the highest levels, particularly in writing, by:
 - making better use of adults in class so they are supporting pupils at all times during the lesson
 - sharing the best practice already within the school more widely.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The two headteachers work well together. They split the week between them and use their different strengths to benefit the school. They have responded well to advice from monitoring visits since the last inspection and pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Attendance has also improved since the last inspection.
- Rigorous systems for checking the quality of teaching have been introduced. These accurately identify where teaching is strong and where it is not good enough. Remedial action, such as staff training, provision of extra resources and support from external consultants, has been effectively focused to support teachers whose pupils do not make enough progress. Senior staff and governors are aware where further improvements need to be made. Leaders have not made enough use of the outstanding teaching in school as part of this improvement process.
- Subject leaders are well organised and check standards in their subjects by following a programme of planned activities. The quality of leadership in English and mathematics is particularly strong. The governing body requires subject leaders to report regularly at its meetings on pupils' achievement in their subjects and on their plans for improvement.
- Effective systems are in place to track the progress pupils are making throughout the school. Leaders meet regularly with every class teacher to discuss pupils' progress, determine how well each pupil is doing and what needs to be done to ensure they catch up if they are falling behind. These systems have worked particularly well in reading and mathematics but have not provided enough challenge to teachers in writing in order to support the progress of the most able pupils more effectively.
- The school improvement plan is well thought through and has been developed in close partnership with governors. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Whole-school targets for reading and mathematics are very challenging, expecting rates of progress and attainment that are well above the national averages. On the other hand, the targets for writing are much lower. The lower expectations in writing have meant too little support has been given to the most able pupils and too few pupils achieve the highest levels.
- The school has developed a curriculum that takes account of pupils' needs. It promotes good achievement and good personal development. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe. A wide range of after-school activities promotes music, sports and cultural development. The school has an extensive programme of competitive sports through inter-house competitions and matches with other schools.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain through activities that are planned in a range of subjects so that their understanding of issues such as democracy and the importance of respecting the law are good.
- Leaders successfully tackle any form of discrimination. They have a strong commitment to equal opportunities and ensure that the different groups of pupils within school are supported effectively. Considerable effort is put into celebrating diversity within the school community, for example, by inviting parents into school to talk about their culture to pupils or by holding an evening celebration of food around the world, which was led by parents. The school's work to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum is carefully planned and effective. Parents are welcome in school and they particularly value the Friday assemblies that celebrate pupils' achievement.
- Particular care is taken by leaders to integrate the high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teachers and support staff are trained to a high level and show skill in ensuring all pupils feel welcome in lessons. When governors realised the proportion of children with significant emotional, behaviour and speech and language needs was going to rise significantly in the Reception class, they successfully sought additional financial support so that additional staff could be taken on. This extra help has ensured that these children make good progress.

- The extra money the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is used wisely so that both academic and social needs are supported. This means that, by the end of Year 6, the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others is relatively small. Money has been used to provide one-to-two support and booster lessons, alongside providing time for mentoring of individual pupils.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to improve the quality of staff skills through partnering class teachers with qualified sports coaches. Additional money has been spent on purchasing equipment and developing extra clubs, so that participation levels have increased.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet the statutory requirements. Policies and procedures are implemented effectively.
- The local authority has confidence in the school leadership team and has provided a range of effective support through regular meetings during the year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body is effective. Regular visits to the school by a wide range of governors mean that they know the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. They also have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. This first-hand information, combined with detailed reports from the headteachers, has helped governors to support the school to bring about improvements since the last inspection. They understand how well pupils achieve in relation to pupils in other schools. Governors ask challenging questions of all staff. Governors have a good understanding of teachers' performance and ensure that only good or better teaching is rewarded through salary increases. They have ensured that safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very proud of the school. They enjoy taking on a wide range of responsibilities. For example, playground buddies help ensure that behaviour at lunchtime is good. Older children look after the youngest as they leave assembly, and compost monitors have responsibility in the garden.
- Around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and helpful. Their manners are excellent as they open the door for adults, wait patiently and use 'please' and 'thank you' regularly.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour at lunchtime well. A wide range of activities and plenty of equipment are available. Pupils of all ages play well together. Occasionally, there are minor disputes, but pupils say these are dealt with quickly. The school has a good system for recording any incidents of misbehaviour and it uses this information to check that behaviour across the school remains good.
- The school works hard to promote good attendance and has been successful in raising attendance levels and reducing the number of pupils who are absent for long periods of time. Any absence identified is followed up quickly with parents. Almost all pupils arrive on time, and lessons start quickly in the morning.
- Pupils enjoy their work and have good attitudes to learning. They understand the behaviour policy well and are keen to be rewarded by appearing in achievement assemblies on a Friday. In class, they work well independently and as part of a group. Occasionally, however, when the work is too easy they can lose concentration, which is partly why behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff and pupils work well together to ensure that the site is secure. Policies to keep pupils safe are applied consistently and staff are well trained. Pupils say they feel safe, and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils feel they can go to their teachers if they are worried about anything, and they really appreciate the care and concern that the two headteachers show for them.

- Procedures for identifying and reporting any safeguarding issues are thorough. The school has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies so that they provide excellent support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Considerable time is taken to get to know families in these situations and provide support above and beyond what is often given.
- Pupils say there is little bullying in school and that the school deals with it effectively. They understand about different types of bullying, including that based on prejudice, and have been learning about how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Parents who spoke with the inspectors were very happy with the way the school looks after their children. They appreciate the openness of the staff and say they are always willing to talk about issues. Parental responses to the online questionnaire show positive support for the school's behaviour and safety strategies.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection so that teaching is now good. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers use their marking of books and other assessments to plan lessons. Teachers use their assessments to identify where pupils have not understood ideas in the previous lesson and provide extra support.
- Classrooms are neat and well organised. Interesting and stimulating displays support learning and celebrate high-quality work.
- Teachers are skilled at questioning pupils and have good subject knowledge. There is much good practice throughout the school. For example, excellent planning and careful classroom organisation allowed pupils in the Reception year and Year 1 to undertake a wide range of mathematical activities. This gave them the chance to learn new concepts and apply them in a variety of ways.
- Most pupils become confident readers because adults teach phonics (the sounds that letters make) well. Pupils enjoy reading in all year groups. Younger pupils have books that are at the correct level for them, and older pupils talk confidently about their love of reading and their favourite authors. There is excellent teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The teaching of mathematics throughout the school is strong. Teachers give pupils challenging tasks and encourage them to think in depth. As well as learning basic number skills, they have a wide range of opportunities to solve problems and work on extended investigations. This helps them develop their overall mathematical ability, and they achieve well by the end of Year 6.
- In most year groups, teaching assistants are used well to support pupils' learning in a wide range of contexts. In some classes, this is not so effective, particularly at the start of lessons and when the adults in the class are not used to provide support for the most able pupils in writing.
- The quality of homework has improved this year. Meetings have been held with a focus group of parents and carers to discuss this issue, and a new timetable has been produced. A large majority of parents and carers are happy with the resulting programme, but a few still have concerns.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective because of carefully planned programmes and good support from the school's special educational needs coordinator. The high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress because teachers provide regular opportunities for high-quality speaking and listening and ensure that lessons are planned so that pupils work is set at the right level of challenge.
- Some teaching is not as strong, mainly because the most able pupils are not challenged in sufficient depth. This is particularly true in writing. These pupils are not given sufficient time to develop their higher-order skills and teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, standards in reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling have been above the national averages, while standards in writing and mathematics have been in line with the national averages. In 2014, pupils left Year 6 approximately two terms ahead of their peers nationally in reading and one term ahead in mathematics, but half a term behind them in writing.
- Checks on pupils' attainment within the school shows that pupils in the current Year 6 are expected to achieve above the national average in reading and mathematics and in line with the average for writing. In other year groups, more pupils are now working at above age-related expectations in writing.
- Most children start in the Reception year with a range of skills and knowledge that are typical for their age, although about a quarter speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of children who achieve the expected good level of development at the end of the Reception year is below the national average because some children do not reach the required level in their early literacy skills. From their different starting points, however, almost all of the children make the expected progress and a substantial proportion make better than expected progress.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2014 was above average. The pupils in the current Year 1 are on track to achieve at a similar level.
- In Key Stage 1, standards have been above average since the last inspection. A dip in 2014 was due to the lower starting points of this group of pupils when they joined school mid-year, although they made secure progress. Results for 2015 show that attainment has returned to the higher levels seen previously.
- Inspectors looked closely at current pupils' standards in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2. Lesson observations, a detailed analysis of books, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of current tracking of pupils' achievement show that the standards in writing are now higher than last year, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5. Improving progress in writing has been a key focus for improvement and the school's actions have had significant impact.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given excellent support by teachers and teaching assistants. Good leadership in this area ensures that any additional needs are identified early. The school has developed its own system of ensuring individual learning plans are in place and sets challenging targets for progress. Parents are consulted regularly and given accurate information on how well their children are doing. Pupils and parents play an active role in setting appropriate targets and evaluating their progress.
- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. Despite the fact that some do not reach age-related expectations by the end of the Reception Year, they continue to learn well in Year 1 so that almost all achieve the expected level in their phonics check. They go on to make good progress in all subjects so that, by the end of Year 6, their achievement is good.
- A clear programme of additional activities ensures that pupils supported through the pupil premium achieve well. The programme includes small-group teaching, intensive support, additional booster classes and counselling where appropriate. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils achieved close to the level of others within the school. In reading, they achieved as well as others pupils in the school, in writing they were half a term behind and in mathematics they were nearly a term behind. Compared with the performance of other pupils nationally they were about a term behind in mathematics, a term ahead in reading and a term and a half behind in writing.
- The most able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should, because teachers' expectations are not always high enough.

The early years provision**is good**

- The leadership of the early years is good. There is a clear vision of how the early years should be run and particularly high levels of training ensure that staff, including teaching assistants, are well qualified in all areas.
- The children enjoy their lessons and take part in a wide range of well-planned and purposeful activities. When they start school they have a wide range of skills and abilities. Most have skills that are typical for their age, but a significant proportion have English language skills that are at an early stage of development and some speak no English at all.
- A range of good quality strategies have been put in place to ensure that, from their different starting points, almost every child makes at least the expected progress. The school has developed excellent systems to get to know the children well before they start school. This information is used to plan activities matched to the children's needs right from the very first lesson.
- Children say they feel safe and have very positive attitudes. This helps them to learn quickly. Staff provide good oral feedback to children as they take part in activities, and these interventions help children to think more deeply about what they are doing.
- The quality of the teaching of phonics varies between the two classes. The teaching is always good but some outstanding practice is not being shared to enable the different groups of children do even better.
- Adults monitor and record the achievements of children and use this information to plan the next steps in their learning. Evidence of progress is recorded in the child's learning journal, but these do not provide enough opportunities for parents to contribute with evidence from what children have been learning at home.
- Safeguarding is good and first-aid training for staff is comprehensive.
- Activities, both inside and outside the classroom, are planned well. Resources are good and children show good levels of confidence. One child used a recording on a tablet computer to show the inspector how she had read a story to the class. She talked excitedly about her interest in science and how the school helped her carry out experiments.

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	135132
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	454855

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Rimell
Headteachers	Linda Corrall and Helen Darrell
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2013
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