

The Bellbird Primary School

Link Road, Sawston, Cambridge, CB22 3GB

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not always make the progress that they should in reading, mathematics and, particularly, writing.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons, or of the presentation of work.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of assessment. This means that work set and reading books are sometimes too difficult for pupils.
- In lessons, teachers do not always make the best use of time. The pace of learning is not always brisk enough.
- Sometimes, when pupils do not understand their learning, teachers do not help them straight away.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils use accurate spelling and punctuation in writing. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to write in a range of subjects, nor are they given enough opportunities to write at length.
- Leaders do not take sufficient account of the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement over time. This results in the school having too positive a view of its work and limits the impact of leadership and management on achievement and teaching.
- Leaders do not provide precise information to teachers on how to improve their practice.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils like their school and get on well together. They are polite and respectful of others' contributions.
- Children get off to a good start when they are in the Reception class. They make good progress because of the good teaching provided for them.
- Subject leaders have improved their practice. They know how well pupils are doing and have appropriate plans to improve teaching in their subjects.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They make sure that the school is focusing on the correct priorities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons taught by 10 teachers and teaching assistants. Two of these lessons were observed together with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work in English and mathematics were analysed from Reception to Year 6. An inspector listened to a sample of pupils from Years 1 and 2 read.
- Meetings and discussions were held with school staff, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a school improvement officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), parents' responses to the school's own recent survey and 22 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: monitoring records; the school's own data on pupils' progress; minutes of governing body meetings; and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

David Herd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynda Beale	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Rudman	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Bellbird is an average-sized primary school.
- Around 80% of the school's population is White British. Pupils from a range of other backgrounds make up the rest of the school. Some new arrivals have little or no experience of English when they join the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. This provides extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those that are looked after and other groups of pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action and those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better, by making sure that teachers consistently:
 - have higher expectations of what pupils should achieve in their work and over time
 - make better use of assessment to ensure that pupils' work is precisely matched to their abilities
 - ensure that no time in lessons is wasted and that the pace of learning is always brisk
 - address pupils' misconceptions immediately to make sure that they understand what they are learning.
- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in their writing, by making sure that teachers:
 - teach pupils to use accurate spellings and punctuation in their writing and encourage them to produce neat work
 - plan regular opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in a range of subject areas
 - give pupils regular opportunities to write at length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, so that it has a greater impact on improving teaching and pupils' achievement, by:
 - making robust checks of all aspects of the school's work so that self-evaluation is accurate
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is accurately evaluated and that teachers receive precise guidance on how to improve
 - sharing the best teaching practice in the school to improve the performance of others.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils are making better progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 than they have in recent years and reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils who made expected progress in 2012 is close to that achieved by pupils in other schools. However, the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress is inconsistent from year to year and pupils' progress in writing is not always good enough. Therefore pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- Pupils' achievement in writing requires improvement because pupils sometimes do not use the basic skills of punctuation and spelling well enough in their writing. Their handwriting is not always well presented. They do not practise their writing skills often enough in subjects other than literacy, nor do they write at sufficient length.
- Younger pupils try to apply their knowledge of letter sounds in their reading. Older pupils can read increasingly difficult words, understand what they are reading and use expression well. However, pupils' progress in reading is sometimes hampered because pupils are provided with reading books that are sometimes too difficult for them.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics varies from year to year. In 2012, it was broadly average when compared with other schools. Where teaching is most effective, pupils make good progress in their understanding of mathematical concepts because teachers plan interesting lessons, pitch work at the correct level and check pupils' understanding. However, this is not always the case and sometimes learning slows.
- Achievement requires improvement for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who therefore receive support from pupil premium funding. Their attainment in English was almost a year behind other pupils in their class at the end of Year 6 in 2012; in mathematics, these pupils were more than a year behind their classmates. The gap between their performance and the performance of other pupils is not narrowing quickly enough.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those having special educational needs is variable and, as a result, their achievement requires improvement. Most pupils make the progress they should. Occasionally, their progress is better than this when the work set for them is carefully matched to their needs and they are supported by skilled staff.
- Children's starting points in Reception are typically below those expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They achieve well, swiftly developing their understanding in language and of number, and they improve their social skills.
- Improvements to attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 have been sustained in 2013. Well above average proportions of pupils in Year 1 achieve the expected standard in the screening for phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and this, together with good teaching in Year 2, has underpinned improvements to outcomes in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Most pupils learning English as an additional language are making good progress in the school. Programmes, matched well to pupils' needs, are run by the school staff to help them to catch up with their classmates.
- Pupils participate well in physical education lessons. For example, they performed well in a Year

3/4 dance lesson and engaged keenly in a Year 6 hockey lesson, displaying good levels of skill. Their achievement in such activities contributes positively to their healthy lifestyles.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to make sure that all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in their work. In one writing lesson, the teacher did not check that pupils were using capital letters and full stops or spelling common words correctly. Teachers do not insist that pupils' handwriting is always neat and that their work is presented tidily.
- Teachers do not always assess pupils' abilities accurately. This means that sometimes they give pupils work that is too difficult for them. Reading books that are given to pupils are sometimes too hard for them to understand, even though pupils try hard with their phonic skills.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons effectively to make sure that pupils learn at a fast pace. In some lessons, valuable time is lost because too much time is taken organising materials that support learning. In other lessons, teachers talk for a long time, with the result that pupils lose concentration. This slows pupils' learning and means that pupils do not have time to practise their skills.
- When pupils make mistakes or do not understand, teachers do not always help them straight away. When pupils make errors with, for example, 'tricky' words, teachers do not help them immediately. In another lesson, when it was evident that pupils did not understand how to solve a problem that had a number of steps, the teacher did not change the lesson quickly enough.
- There is some good teaching, most notably in the Reception class and at the end of other key stages. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher was swift to correct any misconceptions. Clear explanations, combined with an enthusiastic delivery, made certain that pupils wanted to learn. Similarly, the straightforward instructions provided by teachers in upper Key Stage 2, together with use of praise, boosted pupils' confidence and made sure that they were determined to do well.
- The teaching provided for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English is good. It is well matched to what each pupil needs, provides good encouragement for the pupils and ensures that they quickly catch up with the other children in the school.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved. Teachers notice what pupils have done well and tell them what they need to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Reception children have good relationships with the adults that work with them. Adults provide clear guidelines on what is expected regarding their behaviour and this leads to a calm learning environment where pupils make good progress.
- As pupils get older, their behaviour is sustained. They show good attitudes to their learning, especially when lessons are interesting and moving at a brisk pace. In Key Stages 1 and 2, they show respect for the views and performances of others and demonstrate that they know how to

behave well. Pupils are friendly and have good manners.

- In the playground, pupils from a range of ages play and get on well together. They are supported by an appropriate number of adults, who supervise them well. In addition, many activities are available. This helps to occupy pupils, giving them useful exercise and promoting their wellbeing.
- Pupils are exceedingly accepting of and friendly with those from other cultures. Bullying and exclusions from school are extremely rare. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and actively discourage inappropriate behaviour. Almost all parents are confident that their children are safe in school. This is confirmed by pupils, who say they are safe and, if there are any incidents, know that they will be dealt with effectively by school staff.
- The school has worked hard to improve pupils' attendance, and attendance rates have risen steadily over recent years. Attendance rates are now above average when compared with other schools. Pupils mostly arrive at school on time.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have undertaken regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, they have not taken into account the past performance of pupils sufficiently in coming to their judgements and sometimes judge the quality of teaching to be better than it actually is. Therefore self evaluation is not completely accurate and leadership and management require improvement.
- Planning for school improvement is correctly focused on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in writing. However, there is not sufficient evidence to show that all teachers are performing consistently well, and the quality of teaching still needs to be raised to a consistently high level.
- Subject leadership has improved. Key subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subjects. They have drawn up appropriate action plans that have started to be implemented. Pupils' achievement is getting better. Improvements secured in 2012 have been sustained and built upon in 2013, although there is more to be done to secure consistently good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness in assemblies and in their classrooms. Pupils know right from wrong and understand the consequences of their actions. They develop good social skills, talking and listening to each other and respecting others' views. They are also developing their awareness of artistic and sporting cultures.
- The school can demonstrate that it makes links between teachers' performance and pay progression. It sets out clearly what is required regarding teacher appraisal. However, despite regular observations of lessons, teachers do not always receive precise guidance about how they can improve their practise. This is linked to leaders' evaluations of teaching being over generous at times.
- The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. Staff have received appropriate training and implement effective procedures.

- Pupils' learning in a range of subjects is appropriately planned, and provides them with some interesting lessons. The school provides a range of clubs and activities, including artistic, sporting and musical experiences. Pupils also benefit from going on residential visits and they enjoy and learn from visitors to school. These add to pupils' enjoyment of school and help to develop their confidence.
- The school engages effectively with a range of partners and services, such as other schools and the local authority. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from training in providing for pupils with additional needs and the progress of these pupils has improved. The school has drawn up plans to make effective use of the recently allocated sport funding. It is focusing on improving teachers' skills and improving pupils' engagement in sport.
- The school has received appropriate levels of support from the local authority. This has focused on data analysis, joint observations of teaching and looking at pupils' work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are determined to improve the school. They know what is happening in school and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they have not ensured that other leaders have paid sufficient attention to making accurate evaluations of the school's work. They oversee the budget well and know how the extra funds from the pupil premium are being used. They check the information provided to them by senior leaders but have not, until recently, offered sufficient challenge regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The governing body demonstrates thoroughness in ensuring that its statutory duties are met, particularly with regard to health and safety and the safeguarding of children.

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	425311

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Rapson
Headteacher	Linda Corral
Date of previous school inspection	01 March 2013
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