

# Kymbrook Lower School

Kimbolton Road, Keysoe, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 2HH

## Inspection dates

17–18 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors do not monitor the school's work with enough precision. They rely too heavily on the headteacher's information about the quality of education. This means that they are not in a strong position to hold leaders to account.
- The headteacher takes on too many responsibilities to manage the workload effectively. Important information about changes in education sometimes gets overlooked.
- The leadership structure does not provide senior leaders and subject leaders with clear roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. They do not contribute enough to the school's self-evaluation or take sole responsibility for leading actions in the school's improvement plan.
- Some policies and other information on the school website are not updated quickly when the Department for Education issues new statutory guidance.
- Leaders and governors have been slow to address weaknesses in the early years provision since the previous inspection five years ago. It still requires improvement.
- Children in Reception do not have enough opportunity to explore, investigate and initiate their own play, especially outdoors.
- The views of parents are mixed. The majority are strong supporters of the school but a significant minority are not.

### The school has the following strengths

- Good teaching in Years 1 to 4 enables most pupils to achieve well in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because staff meet their social, emotional, health and academic needs well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, respectful and they enjoy learning. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- The school is an inclusive community. All pupils are valued as special and unique individuals. Diversity is celebrated.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - governors form an accurate and independent view of the quality of education
  - leaders and managers at all levels clearly understand the aspects of the school's work which they are responsible and accountable for
  - leaders and governors keep abreast of updates and revisions of statutory guidance
  - policies, procedures and administrative tasks are updated on time
  - the school's plans for improvement include milestones against which progress can be checked at key review points with sharper deadlines for the completion of tasks.
- Provide children in the early years with a wider range of experiences that capture their interest and encourage them to experiment, explore and discover through play, especially outdoors.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Governors do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning well enough. The headteacher writes regular reports to update them and meets with the chair but as governors confirmed, 'we are a bit haphazard'. Governors are too dependent upon what the headteacher tells them.
- The headteacher does not delegate enough duties to other staff with clear expectations and targets so that their performance against them can be evaluated. She takes on administrative tasks and manages building projects in addition to responsibilities for the education of all pupils, management of staff, and for school policy making. As a consequence, some of the work is not completed effectively; revised statutory guidance is sometimes overlooked and policies do not get updated quickly.
- The headteacher bases plans for improvement on the strengths and weaknesses identified through checking the quality of teaching and learning. Few other staff contribute to the formulation of the plan, lead actions or monitor these actions.
- Timescales for improvements to be made are not tight enough. Provision in the early years was not good at the previous inspection. This school year it is beginning to show signs of improvement but requires more work to be judged good. Progress towards improvement has been too slow.
- The headteacher's written evaluation of how well the school is performing is not borne out fully in practice. For example, 'training for all' is highlighted in the school's self-evaluation as enhancing the quality of staffing; in the staff questionnaire, however, only half of the respondents agreed that the school uses professional development well to encourage, challenge and support them.
- The level of satisfaction among parents is mixed. Most parents are positive about the school and the six who spoke directly with the lead inspector were extremely complimentary about all aspects of the school's work. Nonetheless, around a quarter of the 46 parents who responded to Parent View do not agree that the school is led and managed well and would not recommend it to another parent.
- The school fosters pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through its broad and enriched curriculum. Pupils have access to all of the national curriculum subjects and a good range of extra-curricular activities during and after school.
- Pupils benefit from the strong values that the school promotes. These help them to grow up respecting different cultures, religions, beliefs and life choices, understanding democracy and why there are rules in society, for example.
- Pupils' emotional well-being and health needs are met as effectively as their learning needs. The good quality of extra help provided contributes to most pupils achieving well, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The sports premium is used appropriately to extend provision for sports and increase participation in sporting events by, for example, employing specialist coaches to work

with pupils and developing sports facilities such as the all-weather surface.

- There are too few pupils who are supported by the pupil premium to report on their achievement without risk of identifying them. Nonetheless, the headteacher and the governing body check that spending of the funding leads to improvement in their achievement.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received light-touch support from the local authority. The local authority agrees that staff have been effective in addressing previous weaknesses in pupils' writing. Attainment in writing is now above average by the end of key stage 1 and these standards, as seen in pupils' written work across a range of subjects, are sustained to the end of Year 4.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance requires improvement to be effective.
- The governing body is not strategic enough in its approach to monitoring teaching and learning and developing an accurate overview of the school's performance.
- Minutes of meetings of the governing body do not provide evidence that what the headteacher reports is questioned or challenged robustly.
- Governors lack experience in unpicking national data about pupils' learning that is available to them. They are unsure of the criteria used by the headteacher to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors know the school well and support it. They do want the best for Kymbrook pupils and share the headteacher's ambition for them to achieve well.
- The governing body ensures that the headteacher's and other staff's performance is appraised annually and that pay increases are linked to how well pupils achieve.
- The governing body has taken into account changes to the age of transfer at the end of this school year. A small temporary committee is overseeing preparations for becoming a primary school. The committee has played its part in allaying parents' fears and dispelling myths about what the changes will bring.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping pupils safe is a suitably high priority. During the inspection, some minor administrative errors were found in the school's records and in its policy for safeguarding. The school acted immediately to make the necessary adjustments to meet the requirements.
- All staff, volunteers and governors undergo statutory checks to ensure their suitability prior to appointment. The school's single central record of the checks is intact and staff files are kept in good order.
- Notes of referrals made to external agencies when concerns are raised about pupils are detailed and kept carefully in chronological order. The nature of the concern and subsequent actions taken are recorded diligently.
- Staff receive training and have recently completed their training in the 'Prevent' duty so

that they are well placed to refer on any concerns. The designated lead professionals for child protection are fully trained and oversee the progress of each case. Everyone knows who they are and what to do if they have any concerns about a child's welfare. Keeping pupils safe is regarded as everyone's duty and responsibility.

- Risk assessments associated with the premises and school visits are comprehensive.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers assess pupils' learning regularly and methodically. They use this information well to plan pupils' learning based on what pupils need to know, understand and learn next. Teachers double-check the accuracy of each other's judgements but, as the local authority's external assessor pointed out in June, formal procedures to moderate pupils' work in a range of subjects across the federation is not well established.
- Teachers gather a range of useful evidence to support their judgements about pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics. They use resources and approaches that enable pupils to deepen their understanding and work at greater depth within the expected standard for the age group.
- Teaching assistants are adept at adjusting the learning when pupils begin to flounder or lose confidence. This ensures that they recover quickly and make good progress.
- Leaders carefully track the progress that individual pupils and groups of pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics. If any pupils fall behind they are identified and extra help follows quickly to help them catch up.
- The teaching of reading is good and reading is promoted widely in the curriculum. Teachers ensure that the books pupils read are matched to their ability. The most able readers discuss their books maturely. They are able to read between the lines to work out meanings. For example, a pupil explained that 'birds dipping their wings' in a story meant that they flew up and dived like dolphins in water.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic. From an early age pupils learn how to break down words into smaller sounds to read them and to blend sounds together to spell new words in their writing.
- The younger pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 meet regularly for a shared reading session. They immerse themselves in books, listen to stories read by adults or read and browse a book with a friend. These sessions contribute to the high level of enjoyment pupils find in reading.
- Pupils receive regular, useful feedback from teachers and teaching assistants while they are working. Misconceptions are picked up quickly and corrected.
- The quality of teachers' marking seen in pupils' books gives clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. This extends to work that pupils complete at home. In addition, pupils review each other's work and do a super job in identifying where their friends have been successful and what could have been even better.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. They know the individual interests and talents of the pupils they teach. Relationships are strong and lend confidence to pupils' learning.
- Comments received from parents with children who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities were extremely complimentary about the school's excellent support, ensuring that their children have full access to the curriculum with work that is closely matched to their needs.

- Staff promote diversity in teaching and learning. For example, in teaching about Christian weddings pupils' attention was drawn to the fact that not all couples choose to be married in a church.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' welfare and well-being are as important to staff as their academic achievement. Their emotional well-being is measured every term against an index that draws staff's attention to pupils who may need extra emotional support.
- Pupils are well informed about all forms of bullying, e-safety and potential dangers in using the internet or social networking. They know what to do if they come across anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Safety reminders and information feature in all classrooms.
- Good levels of supervision at lunchtime ensure that pupils always have an adult to turn to if they feel troubled or upset.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Teaching meets their needs well so they concentrate and show resilience if they find the work difficult.
- Pupils respond to the school's high expectations for good behaviour. They listen to adults' instructions and follow them without question. Pupils are polite and respectful.
- Lunchtimes are harmonious. Pupils mix and play together well, sharing amicably the very wide range of resources available to them to play with. The older pupils look out for the younger ones and act as good role models for them.
- The atmosphere in school is orderly and purposeful.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils value their school, their teachers and each other. They enjoy learning.
- Use of fixed-term or permanent exclusion has not been necessary to date. The school acts quickly to discuss with parents any difficulties that pupils may exhibit in their behaviour to agree a suitable way forward. This works well for most but not all parents. A very small minority commented negatively about the school's approach. The lead inspector observed only good behaviour over the two-day inspection and written records of historic incidents showed that procedures to follow up incidents are robust.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- With very small numbers of pupils in each year group, national data about pupils' attainment is not always reliable and can fluctuate widely from year to year depending on the individual needs of pupils in each year group.
- Most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in a range of subjects. In 2016, pupils' attainment was above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of key stage 1. Most pupils were working at or in greater depth in these subjects by the end of Year 4, preparing them well for the transition to middle school.
- Importantly, pupils learn to read proficiently. Some of the most able pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, talked about their favourite authors and genres that they enjoy. They knew exactly what their targets for reading were and what they needed to do to improve. Pupils of all ages are avid readers at home and at school as their reading records show. They make good use of the attractive, well-resourced lending library and many request books written by their favourite authors when new books are being purchased.
- Most pupils achieve well in other subjects, such as music, physical education and modern foreign languages because specialists enrich the provision in these subjects with their expertise. Pupils learn to play tuned instruments, take part in inter-school sports competitions and learn French, reaching a standard that prepares them well for further foreign language teaching in their next school.
- The younger pupils are developing their handwriting well and form letters correctly. In Years 3 and 4, handwriting falls short of the expectations for the year groups in the 2014 national curriculum where pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, including those with complex needs.

## Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

- Children's stages of development on entry to Reception are mixed. Most make expected progress from their individual starting points but few exceed the early learning goals.
- The small numbers in each cohort means that the proportion reaching a good level of development in readiness for learning in Year 1 varies significantly from year to year. For example, in 2014 the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was well below the national average, in 2015 it was above average.
- Provision for Reception-aged children covers all areas of learning inside the classroom and generally meets the needs of the age range. The well-organised classroom space encourages children to play together and cooperate with one another as they share toys, tools and resources. However, the planned activities lack sufficient scope for children to experiment, explore and invent.
- Choices are too limited when children play outside. The early years garden is

underdeveloped as an exciting and inviting environment for learning.

- Planning does not consistently take into account the wide variation in children's development as well as their individual interests and preferences. For example, children practised forming letters in a workbook. Some were not yet at the stage where they were ready to do this successfully. Consequently, they did not find the task enjoyable and their progress was limited.
- The school has reorganised its class structure from September 2016. Children of Reception age are for the first time being taught alongside Year 1. This has been beneficial for children's transition from the early years curriculum to the national curriculum taught in Year 1.
- Adults working with children show sensitivity towards them and promote their self-esteem and personal development well.
- Children with additional needs are referred quickly to external agencies to seek additional support in meeting their needs.
- Parents' written and spoken comments were complimentary about how well their children settle when they start school.
- All of the early years welfare requirements are met.



## School details

Unique reference number	109590
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10003438

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean O'Brien
Headteacher	Verity Slaughter-Penney
Telephone number	01234 376266
Website	<a href="http://www.kymbrooklowerschool.co.uk">www.kymbrooklowerschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:kymbrook@ktfederation.co.uk">kymbrook@ktfederation.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2011

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on its website about the impact of pupil premium and sports funding on pupils' achievement, details of governors' pecuniary interests and whether they govern in other schools.
- This school is smaller than average compared to schools of the same type.
- The school is federated with Thurleigh Lower School with one headteacher and a single governing body overseeing the work in both schools.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education providing support to other schools in the local authority.
- Numbers in each year group are small. Reception-aged children are taught with Year 1. Year 2 are taught as single age group. Years 3 and 4 are taught together in one class.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

above average. Fewer than five pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.

- Schools in the local area are moving from a three-tier system to a two-tier system from September 2017. Kymbrook will become a primary school – changing its age of transfer from Year 4 to Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has the discretionary power to inspect any school in England under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection began as a one-day, short section 8 inspection led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). During the first day, the HMI converted the inspection to a full section 5 inspection and returned on the second day to complete the inspection.
- The HMI observed teaching and learning in all classes at least once and sometimes jointly with the headteacher. She spoke to teachers and teaching assistants about pupils' learning. A few pupils read to her and talked about their books.
- The inspector looked at pupils' written work in their English, mathematics and topic books and on display in classrooms. The school provided information about the progress that pupils are making currently. Published information about pupils' attainment in relation to all pupils nationally was considered.
- The HMI observed pupils having their lunch and at play during the lunchbreak. She spoke to pupils while they worked in class and more formally in a group.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, staff responsible for administration and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of 42 parents who responded to Parent View and eight staff who completed the staff questionnaire were considered. In addition, six parents met with the lead inspector.
- The HMI looked at a range of the school's documentation including policies and record keeping for safeguarding, behaviour and safety. Electronic versions of the school's admissions register and attendance information were seen. The single central record of statutory suitability vetting carried out on all staff, volunteers and governors was checked.
- The school's information about how well it is performing and its plans for future improvements was evaluated. Anonymised copies of documents about teachers' performance were seen. Minutes of the governing body's meetings were examined.

## Inspection team

Linda Killman, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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