

Chestnuts Primary School

Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK3 5EN

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The senior team shares the headteacher's ambition for the pupils in the school. Through their hard work and commitment, they are all determined that every pupil has the best opportunity to succeed.
- The recently appointed headteacher provides strong leadership. She is robust, rigorous and relentless in her drive to improve the school. Outcomes are improving rapidly but they are not yet good.
- Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have secure plans in place to address remaining issues.
- Leaders and teachers have improved teaching effectively. As a result, most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are making good progress in reading and writing. Their progress is not as strong in mathematics.
- Although achievement for the most able pupils is improving, they do not consistently achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been consistently below the national average but are improving.
- The school welcomes a high number of pupils with SEND. These pupils play a full part in school life. The school is caring and nurtures all pupils well.
- Support from the Inspiring Futures through Learning multi-academy trust has been instrumental to the school's improvement. Governors are well equipped to provide effective challenge and support for leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils relish the responsibilities they are given to contribute to school life and work together.
- Children in the early years are happy, successful learners. They make good progress and achieve well because teaching is planned effectively to meet their needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are confident and articulate and say that they enjoy school. Pupils work hard and are keen to learn.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school's pastoral care. Staff go the extra mile to help pupils and, as a result, attendance and punctuality are improving rapidly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen pupils' progress so that achievement continues to rise in all subjects, and particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are high enough to enable a greater proportion to reach the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Continue to develop the wider curriculum so that pupils gain subject-specific knowledge and understanding of a range of subjects.
- Build on the work already undertaken to ensure that most pupils reach the national standards in the phonics screening check in 2019.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since taking up her post, the headteacher has managed a significant number of staff changes well. She has restructured her leadership team to ensure that individuals' skills and knowledge are being well directed to continue to improve pupils' education. Senior leaders teach on a regular basis to support teachers in raising standards. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' progress but outcomes are not yet good.
- Leaders have successfully created a culture that has pupils' learning, safety and welfare at its heart. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement accurately and in detail. They have been successful in developing a caring and nurturing culture.
- The high expectations of senior leaders, supported by high-quality training for all staff and rigorous and effective monitoring, have resulted in teaching, learning and assessment improving significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher. She knows that, in order to achieve the best outcomes, pupils need to receive high-quality teaching from teachers and additional adults. Leaders continue to provide support and challenge where practice is weaker.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and use their checks to challenge teachers. For instance, leaders now make sure that teachers are held to account stringently for the progress pupils make through regular pupil progress meetings. In addition, they ensure that pupils identified as needing extra help receive it. This makes a positive difference. The accurate identification of pupils' needs and effective monitoring of the impact of support mean that targeted pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders and governors have developed a strong sense of purpose among staff and morale is high. Staff enjoy working at the school and display an unshakeable commitment to the well-being of the pupils in their care. Most staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have strengthened the support for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator is very knowledgeable and provides high-quality training and support for staff, as well as teaching in the nurture class every morning.
- Additional funding is used effectively to enhance the progress that pupils make. The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is leading to improved skills and a greater range of sporting opportunities and activities. Leaders are aware of the specific emotional, welfare and academic needs of disadvantaged pupils. The family support worker checks carefully how well these pupils are doing, and reports on the positive impact of the funding on pupils' progress, attendance and well-being.
- Leaders have recently adopted a new curriculum which offers stimulating experiences. However, more work is needed to ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to acquire subject-specific knowledge and skills in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils told inspectors that they would appreciate more opportunities to learn through science.

- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils reflect on issues related to equality and diversity to promote positive attitudes and effective relationships. For example, in a whole-school assembly, pupils and adults were proud to use sign language, which helped them to communicate well with the hearing impaired pupils in the school, while also raising money for the charity 'Sign Health'.

Governance of the school

- The trust has overall responsibility for governance of the school. It works effectively with the local governor committee because all parties are clearly committed to the school and work collaboratively. This effective partnership ensures that everyone is rigorously held to account.
- Governors on the local governor committee have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have taken positive steps to support senior leaders to begin to remedy the decline in standards. Governors also keep up to date with the actions that leaders are taking through their regular visits to the school. In addition, they receive timely information from the headteacher in detailed reports.
- The records of governors' and trust board meetings show that governors and trustees challenge and contribute well to the school's improvement planning. Leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as for the quality of outcomes for pupils seen in statutory tests and school data. Governors are passionate to see all pupils fulfil their true potential.
- Governors monitor the spending of additional funding and effectively hold leaders to account to ensure that the funding has a direct impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, governors challenge leaders to demonstrate the impact of additional intervention and support for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the pupil premium is spent effectively. Governors also ensure that the primary PE and sport premium funding is being spent appropriately to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and participation in sport.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding which places pupils at the heart of the school's work. During the inspection, several members of school staff were checked for their knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of pupils being at risk. Staff and governors are clear about what to look out for because of the induction and continued training they receive.
- Leaders have ensured that there are clear procedures for staff to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders, including the family support worker, act on concerns quickly and make further referrals when necessary. Furthermore, leaders are not afraid to escalate a concern if they feel that they have not received an adequate response.
- Designated safeguarding leaders work with a variety of external agencies to minimise vulnerable pupils' risk of serious harm. Governors go about their safeguarding duties

diligently and have been well trained. The safeguarding governor meets with leaders frequently to review safeguarding practice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have relentlessly tackled the shortcomings in teaching, learning and assessment so that practice is now good.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge in English and mathematics contributes well to pupils' progress and learning. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. Most teachers use assessments well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and to plan activities accordingly.
- For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher continually assessed pupils' understanding as they converted fractions, percentages and decimals. The teacher intervened with focused questions, challenging pupils to show and explain what they did and why.
- Pupils can choose a challenge in some lessons. This works well when the teacher checks the appropriateness of their choice. In a very few lessons, especially mathematics, pupils choose the easy challenge when they could be benefiting from a more challenging option.
- Additional adults work skilfully alongside pupils in classrooms so that they are fully engaged in lessons. They question pupils carefully to help them to clarify their thinking and keep focused. Good additional resources are used to support good behaviour, engagement and learning.
- Pupils apply their knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics increasingly effectively so that they develop their understanding well. This is not yet as advanced in other subjects.
- Pupils work cooperatively and their attitudes to learning are positive. They are keen to share their views with one another. For example, in one Year 4 class, the teacher had carefully planned an activity to encourage pupils to think about what had happened and why, and challenge different points of view backed up with evidence. The debate was lively but very focused and pupils of all abilities were well engaged.
- Most work in pupils' books is well presented and pupils are proud to share these with visitors. Teachers' feedback to pupils about their work accurately reflects the school's marking policy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively when their teacher is talking to them and respond well to their instructions.
- Leaders ensure that provision for pupils with SEND is appropriate and effective. Specialist staff provide the right support for pupils in their care. Leaders arrange additional activities to support the personal development and welfare of these pupils.

For example, the headteacher has successfully bid for funding to support disabled pupils to go horse riding each week.

- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They report that, when it occasionally does occur, they speak with adults in the school. It is then resolved quickly.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in a wide range of situations. Pupils speak eloquently about the steps they should take to stay safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The ethos of the school is highly inclusive. Pupils understand it would be wrong to exclude anyone.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and support them well in achieving good standards. For a minority of pupils who find this more of a challenge, teachers employ good strategies to make sure that any poor behaviour does not get in the way of learning. Teachers are well supported in this by additional adults.
- Pupils commented that some pupils regularly use bad language but that adults manage this well.
- Several parents indicated their concerns about the behaviour of some pupils in the school. Current forms of communication with parents do not keep them as well informed as they could be about how the school manages any challenging behaviour successfully.
- Attendance is broadly in line with national averages because pupils enjoy school and particularly enjoy learning. There are still too many pupils who are persistently absent, and this remains a challenge for leaders.
- Attendance is monitored closely as the school wants every pupil to be safe and in school learning. Any absenteeism is followed up quickly and all possible steps are taken to get pupils into school. On a recent 'snow day', the headteacher did not close the school as she knows that every day of learning is important for the pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Clear improvements to teaching, learning and assessment have ensured that current pupils' progress and attainment are improving from a very low base. However, inconsistencies remain, which is why outcomes are not yet good.
- Pupils leaving key stage 2 in 2018 made below-average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils are making increasingly strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attainment is rising. However, progress in mathematics is not as strong in some year groups and more work needs to be done to help pupils to catch up.
- The most able pupils do not always achieve highly enough. Pupils' outcomes in 2017 and 2018 in reading, writing and mathematics at greater depth were below national

figures. There is more work to be done to ensure that more pupils than in the past achieve the higher standards in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics.

- The work in current pupils' books in a range of subjects shows that a greater proportion of pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. However, teaching does not ensure fully that all pupils are challenged to reach the higher standards in every subject.
- Progress is less strong in some aspects of the wider curriculum because pupils are not yet consistently taught the body of skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to make good progress in other curriculum areas. For example, although only recently taught, pupils did not know key information about the Chinese New Year.
- Current disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are making increasingly strong progress because of improved teaching and very high-quality care and support from support assistants. This means they are making progress that is similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- Since the school opened, the proportion of pupils who meet the standard required in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below the national average. Leaders have improved the school's approach to phonics teaching over the past year. As a result, current pupils in key stage 1 are developing a more secure understanding of the sounds letters make and phonics outcomes are improving rapidly.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is good. Effective leadership and strong teaching mean that children are making good progress.
- In 2018, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was broadly in line with the national average, despite children joining Reception with levels of development that are significantly below what are expected.
- The proportion of children making strong progress is improving. This is, in part, due to leaders' commitment to preparing children well for school. As part of their approach, all children were targeted for early additional support in the summer term at the local Nursery, with a focus on developing communication and language skills. This approach helped children make a good start in Reception.
- Children's level of development is accurately assessed when they join the setting. This helps staff to provide the additional support needed, including with communication. Activities are carefully planned and maximise opportunities for children to talk while they play. For example, having read 'Mr Gumpy's Outing', the children talked and made plans for Mr Gumpy to visit other places like the moon and built a rocket for him to travel in and a space helmet to wear.
- Following training in phonics, adults effectively support children in learning how to read. In addition, in early years phonics lessons, teachers check carefully to ensure that all children make the necessary gains in phonics knowledge. Children are supported to sound out and form letters so that they can read simple sentences, such as 'I can hop', with increased confidence. Consequently, children make strong progress in phonics in Reception and are prepared well for their phonics learning in Year 1.

- Staff enhance children’s learning by asking them questions while they play. Leaders have worked successfully with adults to ensure that they have the skills to pose sufficiently probing questions to children in their care.
- Of note has been the impact of a range of effective approaches to involve parents in their youngsters’ learning, which includes staff modelling to parents how to play with children constructively.
- Children in the setting play in an orderly and harmonious manner. They can follow instructions and cope well with transitions between activities. Leaders ensure that the setting is safe and children are well versed in spotting potential dangers. The quality of the provision means that children are well prepared for Year 1.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 143265 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 10084363 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | All-through primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 407 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Mr Wayne Scott |
| Headteacher | Miss Becky Skillings |
| Telephone number | 01908 373 748 |
| Website | www.chestnutsprimaryschool.co.uk |
| Email address | office@chestnuts.milton-keynes.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It joined the Inspiring Futures through Learning multi-academy trust in September 2016.
- The headteacher was the interim headteacher from September 2017 and was made the permanent headteacher in March 2018.
- Approximately half of the staff have joined the school since April 2018.
- A new senior leadership team was established in September 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is significantly higher than the national average. Many parents who have children with SEND who live outside the catchment area choose to send their children to the school.

- In 2018, the school won the local authority award for its good provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school has a unit for hearing impaired pupils, as well as provision for pupils who need social, emotional and mental health support.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school. Senior leaders observed some lessons jointly with inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in their books.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes was observed.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons and around the school and held a formal meeting with pupils.
- Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' learning in mathematics and writing and looked in other books as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and the leader for the early years, who was accompanied by a representative from the trust. In addition to this, inspectors met with members of the governing body and the trust, and those responsible for safeguarding, welfare and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and the school development plan. They also looked at documents provided by the trust, minutes of the governing body's meetings, the school's policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors consulted the school's website prior to the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents gathered during the inspection, in addition to 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 51 free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of staff gathered during formal and informal meetings. They also considered 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Sarah Varnom, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Kusum Trikha | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christopher Crouch | Ofsted Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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