

# Pepper Hill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110330
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	356721
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Hugh Protherough

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	148
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Collinge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Webb
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Kingsfold, Bradville Milton Keynes MK13 7BQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed a total of 13 lessons and eight teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work, documents such as the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupil progress. Inspectors met with parents, governors and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and a group of pupils from Year 2. They analysed inspection questionnaires completed by 34 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Whether recent improvements in attainment have been sustained, especially in writing, and all pupils are making sufficient progress from their starting points.
- The extent to which teaching and the school's curriculum engage pupils and ensure the successful development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- How far senior and middle leaders can demonstrate the impact of their work on improving provision and pupil outcomes.

## Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. The majority of pupils are of White British background. A range of other groups are also represented, the largest of which are Black or Black British African and Asian or Asian British Pakistani. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above the national average and about 10 per cent of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is high, but below average for those with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is almost double the national average.

An interim headteacher led the school between September 2009 and August 2010. A new substantive headteacher took up post in September 2010.

The school shares its building with a children's centre which was inspected at the same time as the school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school that continues to provide well for its pupils. High levels of satisfaction expressed by parents and carers are a direct reflection of its well-established culture of care and support for pupils of all backgrounds, and pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recent changes of headteacher were well managed by the governing body and staff, who ensured that pupils continued to achieve well. Their concerted successful action to raise attainment in English and mathematics since the last inspection has been sustained. The new headteacher has settled swiftly into the school community and has won the confidence of staff and pupils. She has made accurate assessment of the school's performance, recognising strengths and identifying those aspects where improvement is required. The school is well placed to improve further.

Teachers' assessments of pupils at age seven show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen to be broadly in line with the national average for the past two years. Data for 2010 shows a further rise, especially in writing. Pupils make good progress from their below average starting points.

The reason for this sustained improvement lies in the thorough approaches to tracking the performance of individual pupils. There is some excellent assessment in English and mathematics which is used effectively to match work to pupils' individual needs, and used to provide additional well-targeted support to groups and individuals that helps anyone falling behind to catch up. Pupils' achievements in other subjects are satisfactory, but work in these lessons is seldom as well matched to individual needs and abilities. The school's curriculum plan ensures a breadth of provision, but lacks the detail to ensure that pupils have proper opportunity to practise and apply the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects.

The new headteacher has already taken effective action in respect of a critical weakness. Historic data suggested that attendance had fallen to very low levels. Her analysis of registers revealed errors in recording. New systems are in place and current data for the first half of term show significant improvement.

Whilst the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong and effective leadership for the staff team, the distribution of middle management responsibilities is at an early stage of development. For instance, leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure children are well cared for, but have yet to develop consistent high quality approaches to assessing children's progress in each of the areas of learning. Subject leaders do not share a clear oversight of the quality of the school's curriculum and its impact on pupil outcomes.

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

- Ensure recent improvements to the arrangements for the recording and monitoring of attendance are consistently applied and the current higher attendance rates maintained. Attendance for the autumn term 2010 should be at least 94.5%. This target to be reviewed and improved each term in discussion with governors.
- Extend the influence of middle leaders to ensure:
  - greater consistency of approach in Early Years Foundation Stage to the assessment of children's work and play in indoor and outdoor classrooms.
  - an improved curriculum in Years 1 and 2 better matched to pupils' individual needs and with opportunities to practise and apply the skills of reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects.
- These features should be evident in 80% of lessons by June 2011.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>2</b>
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'We like this school because it's friendly and teachers help you!' summed up the enthusiastic views of the Year 2 pupils who spoke to the inspectors. Although many pupils arrive at school with levels of knowledge and skills that are lower than expected nationally, staff are conspicuously successful in raising self-esteem and helping pupils to identify when they are doing well. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. Behaviour is mostly of a good standard, although when unsupervised, a small minority find it difficult to sustain this. Observations of vulnerable pupils show they are well cared for and helped to develop independence and to play a full part in the life of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to live a healthy life and by Year 2 are beginning to understand the importance of diet and exercise. These good personal attributes contribute to their adequate preparation for the next stage in their learning.

The school knows that whilst pupils are making good progress, the attainment of boys and White British pupils is not quite as good as that of girls and those who speak English as an additional language. A variety of strategies are successfully helping to narrow the gap, and inspectors witnessed at first hand the pupils' enthusiasm and success when working one to one with teachers or teaching assistants in literacy and numeracy.

In most lessons, pupils work hard and enjoy learning. They respond positively to stories and many enjoy writing their own. The use of toys and equipment helps motivate younger pupils to write captions and labels. Practical activities involving cutting, sticking and measuring ensure pupils are enthusiastically learning about two-dimensional shapes. Pupils' work in other subjects is not as well developed as that in English and mathematics. In particular, there are too few opportunities to engage boys in the types of investigative work that would accelerate their learning.

Historic attendance as reported by the school fell sharply over the past three years and was low. Errors in recording attendance have been rectified to ensure the accuracy of future data. The school works successfully to support a significant number of vulnerable families who struggle to get their children to school each day. Attendance for the new school year is currently higher and comfortably above average.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils support a positive ethos for learning. Most lessons progress at a good pace, but occasionally the introductions go on for too long and pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to sustain their concentration. Lesson planning is detailed and, in English and mathematics, identifies appropriate objectives that cater thoughtfully for the wide range of abilities in each class. As a result, pupils understand what they are expected to learn and when they have achieved this. Teaching assistants are at their most effective when working with individuals or small groups of pupils with special educational needs. Sometimes they are insufficiently involved in supporting pupils when teachers are introducing lessons. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' work and in good lessons use this knowledge to accelerate progress, asking questions that challenge pupils to think carefully. Pupils receive good feedback about their work in English and mathematics and in these subjects are clear about their targets and what they need to do to succeed.

Whilst the school's curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities, it lacks coherence. The inspectors' analysis of pupils' work shows that too often pupils are faced with identical tasks that do little to enhance the learning of the least able, or extend the more able. Teachers attempt to enhance learning by making links between subjects, but the current curriculum map lacks the necessary detail to ensure the progressive development of skills, knowledge and understanding in different subjects. As a result,

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opportunities to practise and reinforce the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects are inconsistent.

Good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The school provides a welcoming environment that celebrates pupils' work. Effective links with parents and a range of agencies, such as health and other services, ensure prompt support for vulnerable pupils.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The staff team is strongly committed to the work of the school, ensuring improvement and the best possible outcomes for pupils. Governors visit regularly and offer good support. Their approach to recruiting a new headteacher was thorough and successful, but past weaknesses in attendance show they are still developing their capacity to challenge and hold the school to account.

Senior leaders have an excellent oversight of the work of the school. The deputy headteacher has developed meticulous approaches to tracking pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. She knows the story behind the data, so that if any pupils appear to be falling behind, she can point to the issues that may underpin this, as well as the action taken to help them to catch up. The support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and the narrowing gap in the achievements of girls and boys in literacy are further good examples of how the school takes concerted action to promote equality of opportunity.

Many middle managers are new to their roles. Senior leaders have correctly identified the proposed review of the curriculum and its impact on learning as a first step towards enabling subject leaders to develop clearer oversight of their responsibilities across the school.

The school adopts recommended good practice for all aspects of risk assessment and the safeguarding of pupils. The headteacher and staff work productively with other agencies, such as health and education welfare, to support the specific needs of individual pupils and their families.

Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect a good understanding of the local context. However, early initiatives to develop pupils' awareness of communities beyond the school have as yet had only limited impact.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make a satisfactory start to their education. Adults in the Nursery ensure that children are well prepared for school, meeting them in their pre-school settings and homes and providing opportunities for them to visit the class. Consequently they settle quickly, make friends and soon become accustomed to school routines. The school's assessments of children at the start of the year show that most arrive with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than the nationally expected levels for three-year-olds. This is particularly the case in respect of their social skills and communication, language and literacy.

The open design of the EYFS unit successfully encourages the development of social skills and assists smooth transition to Reception classes. Staff plan in considerable detail to ensure a balance of activities that children choose for themselves and those that adults lead. The plan is sensibly linked to a central theme or story which engages the interest of the children, but the exciting possibilities of the current jungle story are not evident in all areas of the setting. For instance, there are no specific plans that would enable the story to be developed within the context of the large and well-equipped outside classroom.

The teaching of letters and sounds and opportunities to practise writing are improving children's early literacy skills. Singing games and a good variety of additional materials motivate the children in these sessions, but sometimes they go on for too long so children lose interest, especially the boys. The deployment of additional adults such as teachers and teaching assistants during these times does not always make maximum use of their talents.

The new leaders of EYFS are enthusiastic and receptive. They recognise that whilst current arrangements ensure all children are safe, secure and eager to learn, the impact of provision could be greater. Although adults keep careful check on the children at work



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and play, the focus of day-to-day assessments and the arrangements for recording these lack rigour and do not consistently inform planning for the next steps in learning. As a result, current progress is satisfactory and the proportion of pupils reaching the outcomes expected of five-year-olds remains below the national average.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The overwhelming majority of these parents and carers express very positive views of the school, and this was further confirmed by the comments of those parents who spoke with the inspectors. Inspectors agree that this is a good school where children are helped to achieve well.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pepper Hill School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 148 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	76	8	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	74	8	24	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	71	9	26	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	65	11	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	53	16	47	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	44	18	53	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	56	14	41	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	62	13	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	44	19	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	47	18	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	65	12	35	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Pepper Hill School, Milton Keynes MK13 7BQ**

Thank you very much for making us so welcome during the recent inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all. The many conversations we had with you have helped us find out all about the school.

You told us Pepper Hill is a good school and a friendly one; we agree. From the moment we arrived, we were impressed by your smiling faces and the cheerful way you greet your new headteacher at the gate each morning as you come into school. You get on well with your teachers and usually work hard in lessons, especially English and mathematics. As a result, you make good progress in your work. ♦ By the time you are seven, the standard of your work has improved so you are ready for junior school.

All the staff work hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for and that you get the help you need to do well. You also have lots of opportunities to keep fit and stay healthy. It's good to see so many of you eating fruit each day and to know that the school council is planning even more equipment for the playground. Almost all of you behave very well around the school, but sometimes one or two of you forget to behave sensibly if the teachers aren't there to remind you!

There are two things we want to happen that will make Pepper Hill an even better school. It's really important that you all come to school every day. The registers show us that this term your attendance has got much better. We want you to keep this up throughout the year, even though it's getting colder and darker! We've also asked the teachers to help you do even better by reviewing their plans so that you have more opportunities for exciting learning, from Nursery all the way through to Year 2.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough Lead inspector

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