

Goldington Green Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109434
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	356541
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Francis
Headteacher	Caroline Skingsley
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 22 lessons taught by 17 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils, representatives of the governing body and with the educational welfare officer. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, particularly that relating to keeping pupils safe and the tracking of their progress. Questionnaires were scrutinised from staff, older pupils and from 54 parents and carers.

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

- The extent to which teaching and pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- The quality of the monitoring of provision and pupils' progress, and the extent to which subject leaders are involved in this process.

Information about the school

This is a large suburban primary school. Just over a half of the pupils are of White British heritage, with the rest coming from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups have Caribbean or East European heritages. More pupils speak English as an additional language than in most schools, but very few are at the early stages of learning English. An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.

The school admits children into the Early Years Foundation Stage the term after their fourth birthday. This means that, in some terms, there is a class for children of Nursery school age. During the inspection, all the youngest children were in the three Reception classes. The school provides before- and after-school care for up to 40 pupils in the Honeysuckle Club, which is managed by the governing body. There is also a pre-school provision on the school's site, which is not managed by the governing body, and which is inspected separately.

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

The school has improved considerably since its last inspection. Excellent leadership, from the headteacher and a very strong governing body, has supported an effective team of staff who successfully focus on improving pupils' behaviour and progress. Subject leaders now make a good contribution to raising standards through their monitoring and support for practice in their areas of responsibility. Pupils are consistently well behaved in class and around the school. All age groups are making good progress, so that achievement is good. Standards at the end of Year 4 are average, despite low standards overall when this group started in the school. Standards are continuing to rise and were above average last year at the end of Year 2.

The key to better progress is the improvement in teaching. Teaching is good and has many strengths, particularly in the use of good procedures to track pupils' progress and so match work to their needs. Teachers routinely prepare different tasks for different pupils although, occasionally, they are not matched as precisely to pupils' needs as they could be, so that a few pupils get work that is too hard or too easy for them. Relationships with pupils are very positive, so pupils are keen to please their teachers by working hard and behaving well. Most lessons have a good pace because teachers use a variety of approaches to involve pupils fully in their learning. There are no major weaknesses in teaching, but sometimes there are inconsistencies in lessons, so that progress is then satisfactory rather than good. The curriculum is of good quality, and improved cross-curricular links have contributed equally to pupils' progress and enjoyment.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes, and make good progress from starting points that, while varying from year to year, are usually below those expected, and sometimes well below. The provision is good, and has recently been enhanced by major improvements to the outside environment. The key stage leader has accurately identified that staff do not yet take full advantage of these improvements to develop children's learning in the way they do indoors. Children's progress is tracked thoroughly, but the way observations are organised does not maximise their impact on planning future learning. The staff are experimenting with ways to improve this.

The school is a happy and harmonious multicultural community because of the good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support, and outstanding provision to promote community cohesion. Pupils' personal development is good and they have excellent relationships with each other and with staff. They thoroughly enjoy school, with one girl saying that she likes school 'more than strawberries!' The excellent links that the school has with parents also contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their progress. Partnerships with a wide range of other schools and organisations also contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and progress. Considerable efforts by the

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school, and the strong links with parents and the educational welfare service, have led to year-on-year improvements in attendance.

The school has good procedures to evaluate its own effectiveness, through tracking pupils' progress and a variety of systems to monitor provision. The improvements made in achievement, behaviour and attendance, and the teamwork and common ambition of staff and governors show the school is well placed to build on its successes in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards through consolidating the improvements made in progress and teaching by:
 - embedding the use of the improved assessments to ensure that work is always matched to the different needs of all pupils
 - maintaining a good pace in all lessons by ensuring that pupils are actively involved and do not spend too long sitting passively listening
 - ensuring that marking more consistently shows pupils how they can improve their future work
 - using the new handwriting scheme to help pupils develop a more fluent and consistent style.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making fuller use of the improved outdoor provision to develop children's learning across the curriculum
 - organising the system for keeping records of children's progress so that it provides a better basis for matching future activities to individuals' needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well from starting points that are generally low. Boys and girls from different groups all do equally well, regardless of their home language or their ethnic heritage. Standards have risen throughout the school and progress is good in lessons. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and work hard. They collaborate well with each other. Frequent opportunities to discuss what they are doing gives them a firm basis of ideas for their writing, for example, although some are slow to develop a joined style and this hampers their fluency in getting their thoughts onto paper. They have good skills in information and communication technology and use these well to enhance their learning in other subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do well because they have work that is matched to their needs. Their progress is enhanced by good support from teaching assistants who are skilled in challenging them to think about what they are doing, and draw a good balance between providing help when needed, while encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible.

Attendance is now average, and a previously high level of persistent absence has been reduced to be in line with the national average. Pupils are keen on exercise, joining in games energetically and with enthusiasm, and have a secure understanding of healthy eating. They feel safe in school and are completely confident that the adults will deal with any problems that arise. Relationships are very positive and pupils greatly value their

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friendships. Boys and girls from all ethnic groups get on well and play and work together happily. They contribute well to the community through the way they show care and respect for all, and in the way they willingly take on responsibilities, such as 'playground friends'. They have a good understanding of each other's cultural heritages, and enjoy learning about the wider world, for example through their strong links with a community in Uganda.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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 teaching is at the heart of the improved achievement since the last inspection. Teachers manage classes well, based on clear expectations and positive relationships. Assessment is accurate and is used well for planning work that meets individuals' needs. Teachers provide a variety of interesting tasks that engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. For example, the use of music and drama in a lesson about a haunted house fully involved pupils and made them eager to put their ideas into writing. In a mathematics lesson in Year 4, the teacher's use of clear visual models helped pupils make good progress in understanding symbols such as 'greater than' in the context of negative numbers. In a small minority of lessons, pupils spend too long sitting without being actively involved. The use of links between subjects makes learning more enjoyable as well as more meaningful: for example in history and literacy, when pupils' discussion of the story of *Oliver Twist* helped them learn more about the Victorians as well as about

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structuring a narrative. Marking is regular and supportive, but does not always show pupils how they can improve their work.

The pastoral care of pupils is a strength that underpins their learning as well as their happiness in school. Good systems are in place to identify any pupils who have problems, and the excellent links with parents and other partners enable the school to provide good help and support on an individual basis. The success of the Nurture Group class is a particularly telling example of the way in which the school provides good emotional and behavioural support for those who need it. The school's provision is enhanced by the before- and after-school club, where pupils of different ages enjoy playing and working together on an interesting variety of activities. The good relationships that permeate the school are particularly apparent here, as is the care that older pupils show for younger ones.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have succeeded in making major improvements since the last inspection, crucially in raising the quality of teaching and learning. Staff, governors, parents and pupils alike express great confidence in the headteacher. Her leadership, strongly supported by that of her deputy, is continuing to drive things forward. All leaders are increasingly involved in observing lessons, scrutinising planning and assessments, and checking pupils' work. This gives them a firm basis to provide advice to colleagues to help them improve their practice, to identify any pupils who are in danger of falling behind, and to provide help to address this. The governing body has an exceptionally good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, is very supportive and helpful, and holds the school rigorously to account for its performance. Safeguarding is good. All procedures are in place and the school acts quickly and effectively to deal with any issues that arise. The excellent work done with parents has been particularly successful in involving parents from all groups in their children's learning, for example through providing up-to-date information on the website about events or homework. English lessons for some parents for whom English is an additional language contribute to the partnership, as well as to the excellent promotion of community cohesion. The well-established relationship with a Christian community in Uganda is being complemented by links with China and Jamaica. Work with other local schools has contributed greatly to staff professional development and to the range of pupils' experiences. Good links are in place with several contrasting schools in the United Kingdom, which are showing a positive impact on community cohesion in the school and for its partners.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many of the strengths in the main school apply equally to the Reception classes. These include children's good behaviour and positive attitudes, and good quality teaching and learning. The provision is led and managed well, staff relationships are strong and good teamwork means standards are rising. The provision is monitored well and any areas of weakness that are identified are addressed by the whole team. Activities are varied and interesting, and children are settled and happy. The tracking of children's progress is robust, although the 'learning journals' used to record the resultant evidence are not organised sufficiently well to give a clear picture of how children are doing to their parents. Welfare arrangements are good and children are safe and secure. All staff are very effective in directly teaching groups of children so their progress is good. There is a good balance between such directed activities and those children chose for themselves but, in the outdoor area, staff sometimes miss opportunities to intervene in children's learning and to extend their understanding.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation	2

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Stage	
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Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the school. They particularly appreciate that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. Most feel strongly that the school helps them to support their children's learning, and that the school is led and managed well. Inspection evidence confirms parents' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Goldington Green Lower 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	72	14	26	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	67	18	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	63	15	28	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	57	21	39	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	54	23	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	61	20	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	54	24	44	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)	29	54	22	41	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	54	24	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	54	22	41	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	54	22	41	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	67	15	28	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	72	14	26	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



16 September 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Goldington Green Lower School, Bedford, MK41 0DP

Thank you for all your help and your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work in lessons.

Your school has improved a lot since the last inspection, and gives you a good education. You are making good progress because the teachers are good at helping you to learn. Your school is a very happy community where everyone is involved, and you have good contacts with other people around Bedford and beyond. You enjoy school, work hard, get on very well together and your behaviour is good.

The adults look after you well and keep a careful track of how you are getting on. They make sure that anyone who needs extra help gets it. The staff and governors are good at organising the school, and are keen to help make things even better. We have agreed there are two main things they are going to concentrate on.

Teachers are going to make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones, and are going to help you improve your handwriting.

The Reception class teachers are going to help children to learn more in the outside area, and are going to keep better notes about how much children are learning.

You can all help with the improvements by keeping up your good behaviour and hard work, and by trying hard with your handwriting.

Best wishes for an enjoyable year at school,

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill

Lead inspector

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