

Dunstable Ickniel Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109444
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	363749
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Butler
Headteacher	Leonora Prewett
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
School address	Dunstable Ickniel Lower School Burr Street Dunstable LU6 3AG
Telephone number	01582 663709
Fax number	01582 670233
Email address	dunstable@ickniel.cbeds.co.uk

Age group	3–9
Inspection date(s)	25–26 May 2011
Inspection number	363749

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body, pupils, and a telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, data on attendance, improvement plans, progress reports, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self evaluation and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 123 parents and carers 135 pupils and 23 staff.

Information about the school

Dunstable Icknield Lower is larger than the average sized primary school and is situated near the centre of the town. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language are both below the national average, but increasing. The percentage of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs is significantly lower than the national average and over the last three years has fallen. The proportion of those with a statement of special educational need is broadly average but has also fallen in recent years. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and has remained stable in recent years. The school holds the international schools award and the effective early learning quality assurance mark.

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	1
Achievement	1
Teaching	1
Leadership and management	1
Behaviour and safety	1
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school that has continued to improve since the last inspection. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and her leadership team has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Almost all pupils make outstanding progress throughout their time in the school as a result of teaching that consistently sets high expectations. Test results are high at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4 they are well ahead of the expected level for their age in English and mathematics. All groups of pupils do well and through highly effective support the number of pupils with special educational needs has been significantly reduced.
- Teaching is outstanding overall because of its consistently high quality. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of different groups of learners and additional support is deployed well for this purpose. Group work and paired discussions are frequent. Lessons move at a cracking pace and instances of overlong teacher led activities are exceptionally rare.
- Behaviour of pupils is of a very high standard, as reflected in their attitude and conduct in lessons and around the school. They get on very well together, respecting each other's differences and are very welcoming towards newcomers. Pupils nearly always enjoy their learning and only very occasionally become restless if an activity goes on for too long. Pupils overwhelmingly say they feel safe in school and this is backed up unanimously by parents. Overall attendance is satisfactory because of the high absence rate of a small minority of pupils.
- The headteacher and leaders at all levels provide very strong leadership which has led to improvements in teaching and achievement. They are well supported by the governing body. Leaders have raised expectations of teachers, pupils

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

and parents through rigorous monitoring and tracking of pupil performance and setting challenging targets which, when they are judged to have been met have been raised further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of pupils' attendance to above the national average by focussing on reducing the absenteeism for those few remaining families where this continues to be an issue.

Main report

The school has improved since the last inspection because of its leaders' relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and thereby raise standards throughout the school from Nursery to Year 4. Pupils have responded positively to the high expectations set and consequently almost all are doing very well by the time they leave. According to one parent, summing up the views of many others, "I could not be happier with this school. Not only have my children received an excellent academic education, they are growing as people. They are taught values and what matters in terms of being a decent human being as well as what they need academically."

Achievement

Nearly all pupils make at least good and often outstanding progress in lessons and consequently standards are rising. From broadly average starting points when they first join the school, children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where teaching, particularly in the Nursery, is exceptional. By the time they are six, pupils are reading at a level above that expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in recent years have been regularly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to the consistent high quality of teaching, pupils do not rest on their laurels in Key Stage 2 but in each year make sustained and rapid progress so that by the time they leave at the end of Year 4 they are working at a level in English and mathematics that is well above that expected for their age.

All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well in lessons and in assessments. This is because of the well tailored provision for their different needs, including effective additional support. Consequently there are now very few pupils identified as having special educational needs, as almost all have successfully narrowed the gap in achievement with the national average by the time they leave school. Nearly all pupils in the survey said they learn a lot in lessons and that the school helps them to do as well as they can. Typically lessons move at a fast pace with a variety of speaking and listening activities that enable pupils to discuss work in pairs or groups or to work independently which enables them to

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

consolidate their learning.

Behaviour and safety

Pupils' behaviour seen during the inspection was exceptional both in lessons and around the playground. Reported incidents of racism and bullying are extremely rare and are dealt with effectively. Pupils feel safe in a secure environment and know there is always an adult they trust who they can talk to. Pupils get on well together in what is an increasingly diverse school community. They demonstrate the values of cooperation, responsibility and care they have acquired through the personal social and health education programme, which makes a significant contribution to pupils' behaviour and well being. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons particularly in groups and pair work where they help and support each other and listen to others' ideas. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Instances of pupils being distracted during teacher led activities are rare.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are willing to help out at lunchtimes in the classroom and contribute suggestions through the school council where they are rightly proud of the improvements to the playground they have initiated. All parents and carers who responded to the survey said their child was happy and safe in school. A very large majority of them thought behaviour was good in school. The attendance of a very small number of pupils is low however which brings the overall attendance down to in line with the national average. Following the school's relentless efforts through pupil tracking and engaging with parents, attendance has improved this year for every single pupil who had a below average attendance last year. The school recognises there is further work to do in order to raise overall attendance to above average.

Teaching

Teaching is always at least good and often outstanding because teachers set high expectations for all pupils. Almost all pupils who responded to the survey said that teaching was good in school. Appropriate challenging tasks are set for individuals including those who find learning easy or difficult and those who have disabilities or special educational needs. Teachers are knowledgeable in their subjects and highly skilled through their lesson planning in setting work that enthuses all groups of learners. The school has invested in a well trained teaching and support staff who work closely together in planning and team teaching in order to share good practice with each other. Coaching and mentoring of staff are ingrained in the life of the school. Teachers deploy additional support staff well to ensure that almost all of their time is used well. Very rarely do pupils spend too long in teacher led activities. Teachers nearly always move lessons on at a brisk pace and vary activities to provide a stimulating learning environment.

Teachers use assessment in lessons well through questioning to find out how well pupils are doing and whether work needs to be modified. They consistently share

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

learning objectives with pupils and make sure they are understood. Work is marked regularly and teachers' comments praise pupils for what they have done well. Written comments for development are fewer but through verbal feedback from teachers nearly all pupils know what they need to do next to improve their learning. They know the individual targets they have been set and when these are achieved more challenging targets follow.

Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders are relentless in holding staff to account for the performance of pupils in their areas of responsibility. Leaders at all levels, including subject coordinators, take responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching. Their observations are accurate and contribute to the rigorous monitoring of pupils throughout the school. They know how well pupils are doing and set challenging targets for further improvements. Following the example of the headteacher all leaders are ambitious to seek further improvements. Leaders know the strengths and relative weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. The consistency of all leaders in the quality of their work and the improvements they have brought about has ensured an excellent capacity to continue to improve further. The governing body is a highly committed and enthusiastic supporter of the school. Governors are fully involved in observing teaching and holding the school to account for the performance of pupils. All parents and carers who responded to the survey agreed that the school is well led and managed.

Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and thorough and the school is doing everything it can to ensure its pupils are as safe as possible and free from bullying or discrimination. All government requirements are met. The school promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring that all groups of pupils and individuals do as well as they can. The school promotes community cohesion well through their extensive knowledge of the school and its local community. This ensures that pupils have opportunities to meet with other children in local schools through sports and music events. They experience diversity in the United Kingdom, for example, through a faith tour. There are also effective links with schools in Wales, and Scotland, and further afield in France, Australia and Russia, as well as partnership with a local special school. Overall the school promotes social, moral, spiritual and cultural development exceptionally well. The school has been recognised as outward looking through its international schools award. The school leaders engage well with parents and carers and have sought numerous ways to involve them in their children's learning. They have effectively drawn on parents' and carers' skills and backgrounds for example during topics on weddings and festivals and a 'bring an adult to work day'. All the staff who responded to the survey also thought the school was well led and managed and all said they were proud to be a member of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dunstable Icknield 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 296 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	87	71	36	29	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	91	74	32	26	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	77	63	36	29	10	8	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	70	57	46	37	6	5	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	81	66	40	33	1	1	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	78	63	44	36	1	1	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	53	43	64	52	2	2	2	2
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	45	37	53	43	11	9	2	2
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	52	42	48	39	2	2	2	2
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	72	59	46	37	3	2	2	2
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	68	55	50	41	4	3	1	1
Q12 The school is well led and managed	80	65	43	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



27 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dunstable Icknield Lower School, Dunstable, LU6 3AG

You will be aware that we recently came to inspect your school. Thank you to those of you who took the time to tell us your views or filled in a questionnaire.

I thought you would like to know what we have said about your school. We think you go to an outstanding school that has improved since its last inspection. Your headteacher and other leaders have made sure that all your lessons inspire you to do as well as you can. As a result you are doing very well in reading and writing and mathematics in all year groups and making outstanding progress during your time in the school.

You have shown us how well you behave in lessons and around the school and it is clear this is typical of how you usually behave as there have been very few reported incidents of misbehaviour. You have told us you feel safe in school and your parents and carers have confirmed this.

Whatever your different needs, your teachers make sure you are set work that is enjoyable but also challenging. When I spoke to some of you after seeing your lessons you told me learning was fun but hard work as well.

You play your part in the life of the school and show that the values you have been taught are reflected in the way you look after each other and show respect and understanding for peoples' differences.

There is one thing we have asked the school to improve and that is to improve overall attendance by working closely with the parents and carers of those of you whose attendance is below average.

Thank you for your friendly greetings and the way you made us so welcome in your school. I hope you are successful in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**