

Hazeldene Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109506
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	363751
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Gell
Headteacher	Helen Ward
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2008
School address	Stancliffe Road Bedford MK41 9AT
Telephone number	01234 300100
Fax number	01234 300102
Email address	hazeldenelower@schools.bedfordshire.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 23 lessons, observing 12 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and both the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and school improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 87 parental questionnaires, 100 responses to the pupil survey and 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How successful is the action to improve achievement in mathematics?
- To what extent are pupils using their information and communication technology skills in support of their learning across subjects?
- Is the school's action to narrow the gap in attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals having an impact?
- How well do teachers use assessment information to meet the needs of all and provide a more personalised experience for pupils?

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have fallen in this above-average-sized school since agreeing with the local authority to reduce to two forms of entry. A quarter of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages and a few recent arrivals are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but rising. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Most of the above average numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs have complex and diverse needs. The new headteacher took up the post in April 2011 having been acting in the role for the previous four terms. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school has recently received the Every Child Matters Quality Mark and the Safeguarding Children award.

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

1

Main findings

Hazeldene Lower is a good and rapidly improving school. It has developed several outstanding features with other aspects moving strongly in this direction. This is because of the impetus generated by the drive and determination of the new headteacher, deputy headteacher, a skilled staff team and a highly effective governing body.

Children make good progress in Reception in a stimulating environment full of interesting and engaging activities. This good progress continues across the rest of the school and attainment is above average by the time the pupils leave Year 4. The recent lower achievement in mathematics is being tackled rigorously and pupils are making accelerated progress. Furthermore, by adopting contexts, which boys find more immediately engaging, gender gaps in writing are narrowing. Teaching is good and improving with some that is outstanding in the way it drives learning forward rapidly. Teachers question skilfully to check understanding, although in the less successful lessons questions are not used to engage all pupils or to challenge them to think deeply and respond in detail.

The school's vision of maximising the achievement of every pupil is being met in many ways. Every child matters very much here as recognised by the recent national award. Pupils are known well as individuals because of the careful attention paid to identifying their specific needs and targeting resources to reduce any gaps in achievement. The focus on supporting pupils known to be eligible for free school meals through homework clubs and other activities typifies the headteacher's concern for all. This has led to gaps between their attainment and that of others in their classes closing considerably. Lessons are linked closely to assessment information and tasks present challenge for all pupils. The move towards creating a more personalised curriculum is developing. However, pupils have limited opportunities to apply their information and communication technology skills to support their learning and marking does not always help them to see how to improve their work and meet their targets.

Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that pupils have great confidence in staff to look after and advise them. Pupils feel extremely safe and very conscious of how to look after themselves and others. They also demonstrate an excellent commitment to and understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. They greatly enjoy learning, and are keen and ambitious. The headteacher has positioned the school at the heart of the community and very strong partnerships with many outside organisations have made a considerable contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being. Pupils make an extensive and highly valued contribution to the school and the wider community. They are very proud of their school, their contribution to its development and to their voice in improving learning.

The school's rapid improvement has been secured through strong and decisive leadership at all levels. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities in an exemplary manner, particularly in relation to safeguarding the pupils and supporting greater community

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cohesion. The headteacher, staff and governors know the school's qualities very well and what is needed in their drive to become outstanding across the board. Self-evaluation is based on the forensic analysis of assessment data and checking on the performance of staff from which perceptive plans are developed for improvement. This and the continual pursuit of excellence give the school an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate learning to meet the school's priority of personalising learning by:
 - engaging pupils consistently in lessons through effective questioning
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their information and communication technology skills across subjects
 - providing more effective guidance through feedback and the marking of the pupils' work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The relentless focus on securing learning is paying dividends and gives pupils a firm basis for success in their future education. Pupils are very attentive of their teachers and the contributions of others. They readily share ideas in discussion and respond confidently to questions because their answers are valued. Their highly developed collaborative skills enable them to work very effectively in pairs and groups. Most select resources and take the initiative when working on practical activities or investigations. Few lose concentration and only when teachers talk too much and do not encourage them to take an active role in lessons.

Pupils' good and accelerating progress is from skills on entry slightly below those expected for their age. Assessments of pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 show that pupils have consistently above average standards and at times significantly so. There is no significant variation in the achievement of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds and the few pupils speaking English as an additional language have settled in because of the close attention paid to their development. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress through support in lessons or from individual programmes such as 'Every Child a Counter'. Pupils with complex and diverse needs are integrated well into lessons as appropriate. Carefully targeted support based on a detailed analysis of their specific needs is provided sensitively by patient support staff. Although their steps forward can be small, this still represents good progress.

The pupils' good behaviour contributes much to the harmonious atmosphere. Pupils of all backgrounds work and play happily together and in most cases try to include everyone in what they are doing. They reflect on their learning such as in response to texts they are reading and make the most of opportunities to participate in cultural activities. They are considerate towards each other and show respect for their feelings. They enjoy physical activities including playing at lunchtime and make thoughtful choices over their food intake, showing great awareness of the importance of a balanced diet. Pupils are acutely aware of road safety and how to identify and deal with risks they might face when using the internet. Through their very active school council, pupils have participated in a safer parking campaign for nearby streets. They take jobs such as playground buddies and peer

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readers with great responsibility, and contribute significantly to improving learning in discussion with senior staff at weekly 'tea parties'.

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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
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?

Teaching is good and at its best, expectations are high and pupils' thinking is challenged. Teachers' detailed planning identifies different groups of pupils and their particular learning needs in all lessons. Classrooms are calm yet very stimulating environments for learning because teachers are adept at managing pupils' behaviour positively. Teachers use resources including interactive technology inventively to generate interest and engage pupils in their learning. Although marking tells pupils how well they are doing, teachers do not always establish a dialogue about steps to take to improve and move up to the next level.

The curriculum is kept constantly under review, carefully adapted to meet individual needs and increasingly enables pupils to take responsibility for planning their learning. The imaginative and activities in 'Mathematics Challenge Week' activities have sparked pupils' interest in applying their mathematical skills to solving problems. They value greatly the mix of clubs and other enrichment activities including educational visits such as the residential trip in Year 4. The school draws well on the expertise of others to provide specialist sports coaching and extend learning for talented pupils.

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The school provides an exceptionally welcoming environment for all pupils. The visibility of the headteacher and deputy headteacher before and after school is greatly appreciated by parents and carers as are the well-attended breakfast and after school clubs. Pupils and their families have high levels of confidence when seeking the school's advice. Multi-agency work is a major strength particularly when the school seeks guidance to support potentially more vulnerable pupils and sharing good practice with a local special school. Arrangements such as providing an outside classroom for Year 1 pupils, helps ease their move through the school. This is supplemented by excellent transition arrangements built on a close relationship with local middle schools.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's high ambitions for the school are shared by staff and the governing body and are expressed in challenging targets for pupils. All are committed to the vision of raising achievement by improving teaching and reducing barriers pupils might face to their learning. The drive to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination makes this a harmonious school where pupils, whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, achieve well. The school uses assessment information is used well to identify and take action to halt any underachievement. Leaders are quick to spot emerging patterns and address any gaps in the achievement of different groups; as a result differences are minimal or closing rapidly. Teachers are keen to work together or observe experts in order to improve their teaching and the drive to improve the quality of teaching is a continual focus.

The very well led governing body challenges the school to do better and is deeply involved in school evaluation and strategic planning. Having identified the headteacher they wanted for the school, thoughtful arrangements enabled her to gain the necessary qualifications before confirming her appointment. The governing body also ensures that procedures for safeguarding the pupils are robust, and their impact is frequently monitored, reviewed and updated. The school's work here has been recognised nationally and includes working with a local university to develop 'on-line' training in safe practices for student teachers.

The school has highly productive partnerships with other agencies to extend learning experiences; they bring in additional expertise to support the pupils' well-being and provide opportunities for teachers' professional development. The headteacher has instigated many activities to forge closer links with home and to engage with harder-to-reach families. The views of parents and carers are regularly sought, but they are not heavily involved in decision-making in key areas. The school bases its plans and actions to

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promote greater community cohesion on a careful analysis of its context. Activities including the effective engagement with local community groups have made a significant contribution. Through careful monitoring the school is continually identifying further priorities and planning further actions for improvements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	2
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	1
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

The school places a strong emphasis on smoothing the children's start to Reception through developing close links with local pre-school providers, taster visits and consultation with parents and carers. As a result, they quickly become confident and settle into the routines of each class. The children's good progress in Reception is built on trusting relationships with adults and each other. Children from a wide range of backgrounds work and play happily together in a harmonious and purposeful environment. They feel safe as their welfare is secure through rigorous and carefully implemented safeguarding arrangements.

Teachers know every child well and assess progress carefully; they plan activities that are sharply matched to children's needs and interests. Children become increasingly independent through the many opportunities to develop their own lines of enquiry and to take responsibility for areas of their learning. They enjoy working together, selecting resources and deciding upon the focus of the role-play area which was previously set up as a garden centre and cafe and currently as a school. Adults pay careful attention to developing children's problem solving skills and providing greater challenge for the more able. Staff have noted that calculation is a weaker element in children's skills and as such is a priority for improvement.

The setting benefits from a secure leadership structure and knowledgeable staff. The team of teachers and support staff share a common purpose and are continually searching for

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ways to improve provision. Staff rigorously monitor performance including the analysis of assessment data to set as a firm basis for improvement planning. Strong links with families help to involve parents and carers in their children's learning, including by keeping them very well informed about their progress through sharing in their topic work. The school takes regular account of the views of parents and carers as part of its drive to forge ever stronger links with home.

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 Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A smaller proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than in most primary schools. The level of satisfaction is high in response to almost all of the questions. This reflects responses received to a school questionnaire completed by parents and carers last month for which there was a much higher return. Inspection evidence endorses their very positive views about the school, particularly the quality of its leadership and management and the way pupils are enabled to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. Inspectors investigated the concerns of a small number of parents and carers about the extent to which the school takes account of their views, but concluded that the school is increasingly seeking to take account of their views, as is the opinion of the large majority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hazeldene 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 310 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	79	17	20	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	74	20	23	2	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	63	25	29	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	66	22	25	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	68	24	28	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	68	22	25	4	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	69	25	29	2	2	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)	45	52	28	32	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	61	26	30	4	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	57	29	33	5	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	60	26	30	5	6	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	63	72	20	23	1	1	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	74	18	21	4	5	1	1

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 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.



25 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazeldene Lower School, Bedford, MK41 9AT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. You say you enjoy attending school and we saw that you work very hard. We noticed how much you were enjoying the activities during 'Mathematics Challenge Week'. Inspectors were particularly impressed by your confident answers to their questions. These are our main findings.

Hazeldene Lower School is good because the headteacher, staff and the governing body do their utmost to help you all to succeed.

Excellent care, guidance and support aid your good achievement and behaviour.

Your very positive attitudes to learning and above average attendance levels contribute significantly to your progress.

The curriculum provides many most enjoyable experiences for you, including a wide range of clubs and other activities.

The school works very well in partnership with others to support your learning and has formed strong links with your parents and carers.

Teaching is good but marking is not used well enough to help you to understand what you need to do to improve.

You develop an excellent understanding of how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle.

You make a highly valued contribution to school life and to the local and wider community.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to improve learning further by ensuring that teachers use questions to make you think more deeply, make better use of computers to support your learning and provide clearer guidance for you through their marking. We ask you to continue to work hard and be appreciative of the efforts the school is making to help you to be successful.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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