

Kymbrook Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109590
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	377948
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Brealey
Headteacher	Verity Kenyon
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by three members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, other staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, development planning, pupils' work and the information used to track pupils' progress. The 44 questionnaire responses from parents and carers were analysed, as were staff and pupils' responses to their own questionnaires.

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

- The reasons why pupils' progress and attainment are typically lower in writing than in reading and mathematics and what action the school has taken to improve this aspect of provision.
- The progress of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school's success in using individual target setting arrangements.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils are taught in one of three classes, two of which are of mixed ages, Years 1/2 and Years 3/4. The school is part of a federation with another local school, both of which are led by the headteacher and sharing one governing body. The schools have separate sites and facilities. All pupils commence the Reception Year in the September following their fourth birthday. A high proportion of the children has previously attended Nursery or pre-school groups. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background. The percentage of pupils designated as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is about the same as that found nationally. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has the Healthy Schools National Award and the Active 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is led and managed well. The pupils enjoy their learning experiences thoroughly. A revised curriculum has blended aspects of learning together so that learning is meaningful and the themes excite the pupils and appeal to their interests. Parents and carers are pleased that their children attend Kymbrook. As one parent wrote, 'My son loves coming to school and always has lots to say about his school day. It's obvious he has been inspired and is really enjoying learning here.'

Pupils get along extremely well together. Older pupils look after and care for the younger ones. They have confidence in their teachers. As one pupil said, 'Whenever you fall over, a teacher will help.' Pupils are interested in lessons, where their good behaviour is a major factor in the amount of work that they produce. They use their time productively. They want to do well and are keen to please. Pupils feel safe in school; 'definitely' they report. They have a good understanding of healthy life styles also, as is reflected in the Healthy Schools Award and the Active Mark. Pupils achieve well and reach standards that are often above those expected nationally for pupils at the end of Year 4. However, standards in reading and mathematics are higher and progress better in these aspects than in writing. Parental support in cooperating with the school is a positive factor in the good standard pupils reach in reading. Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The staff in that part of the school are still refining their skills for teaching, using assessment and developing the curriculum for that particular age group, but are keen to develop further and so develop the full potential in the learning activities that are planned.

The staff take good care of the pupils and work together well as a team in the pupils' interests. Teaching is good overall. Teachers plan lessons well and work hard to ensure that tasks match the next steps needed in pupils' learning. In many lessons, the good use of teaching assistants ensures that the pupils who most need it have extra help to manage their work and this supports the good progress pupils make. However, staff do not demonstrate different types of writing enough or read with pupils frequently enough to increase the pupils' vocabulary and improve writing.

The school has evaluated itself with much accuracy. The good progress in improvement since the previous inspection, good teaching and the imaginatively developing curriculum show the school has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing by:
 - demonstrating different styles of writing with pupils, so that they are more aware of techniques and audience when writing
 - reading literature to pupils more regularly, so that they increase their vocabulary and develop their imaginations.

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - using the assessments of the children to plan further learning
 - engaging more fully in activities with the children to develop their learning and vocabulary
 - planning activities that heighten the children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The level of attainment on entry varies from year to year because of the small numbers of pupils, often with a wide range of ability. Overall, it is similar to that expected for the children's age. By the end of Year 4, attainment is usually above that expected for this age. A significant percentage of the pupils reaches the level expected of Year 6 pupils. Pupils make good progress in their learning. The school has introduced a structured programme for pupils to learn letter sounds and blends and so to support writing skills, which are weaker than reading and mathematics. There are early signs of success through this initiative and even the youngest pupils are increasingly prepared to have a go with writing on their own.

Pupils make good progress in science. In a Years 3/4 lesson, pupils showed great enthusiasm and good investigative skills as they explored magnetic and non-magnetic objects, drew conclusions and set up further hypotheses to follow through. Pupils operate computers with confidence and use them well in different subjects to support their work and to research information. The investigative style of homework and the interest of parents and carers contribute also to the pupils' good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because the support programmes and small-group working help their academic development. More-able pupils develop their skills well because they have good opportunities to extend their learning. In a Year 1/2 mathematics lesson, for example, able pupils investigated quarters, while others worked on halving. Saturday morning classes in the area, also, extend those pupils' learning skills.

Pupils feel safe in school and they have a good knowledge of keeping safe when out and about. They mention 'keeping out of building sites' and alerting their parents and carers to where they are. They have a good understanding of healthy eating and the need for exercise and it is evident that they follow these matters through. That is reflected in the school's Active Mark award. Pupils behave well in class and take a

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keen interest in their studies. They get involved in village events, planning some and taking part in others. Their efforts for the elderly, for example, in delivering harvest produce, are much appreciated, as is the Christmas entertainment to which the elderly are invited. The school council contributes well to school life. Council members organise events successfully, engaging all the pupils to raise money for charity. The pupils raised funds for a friendship bench in the playground. Pupils' attendance is above average and they are punctual. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and work well together in teams. Pupils have a good awareness of other faiths and cultural diversity with plans to extend their understanding more globally. Pupils are well prepared for their future education through the development of good core and social skills.

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	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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff have good relationships with the pupils and the atmosphere for learning supports pupils' good progress. Teaching is particularly good in Years 3/ 4, where progress accelerates. Some outstanding teaching was observed in that class. Marking is good and the pupils are made aware of how they can improve their work. Pupils know their individual targets for mathematics and English and these are written in language that the pupils can understand. The targets support their progress well. Teachers share the learning intentions clearly and there is a good balance of activity, discussion and instruction. However, teachers do not demonstrate different styles of writing well enough. Staff pay good attention to the pupils' ages and abilities when they plan work. Pupils at all levels of attainment are progressed by being provided

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

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with work which matches their capability. For example, pupils are grouped across the age range for the teaching of letter sounds, blends and grammar. Teaching assistants are usually deployed well, but sometimes do too little in the first part of the lessons when teachers are introducing lessons. Teachers use inter-active boards effectively to present lessons visually, which keeps pupils interested.

The curriculum, carefully, blends good attention to the basic skills with themes providing scope to apply and develop core skills alongside more practical learning. A more creative curriculum has been devised and is developing further. Themes such as ‘Dungeons and Dragons’ appeal to the pupils’ imaginations. In that example, the school borrowed a local equestrian centre to put on a banquet in which two key characters arrived on horses. The pupils dressed up and took parts. The new approach provides scope for purposeful writing. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, including sport. Talented pupils meet up with pupils from other schools occasionally for extra sessions which develop their skills. Some more-able pupils attend Saturday sessions for extra mathematics. The local authority’s Children’s University provides several opportunities for pupils to pursue learning interests in the summer. However, opportunities for pupils to hear good-quality literature to develop ideas and vocabulary in support of writing are not regular enough.

The school provides a welcoming environment where staff and pupils can work together harmoniously. Pupils are known very well to adults working with them. A careful watch is kept on any pupil who may be vulnerable, or in danger of falling behind. The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that the pupils receive good support. Effective transition arrangements help children settle well in the Reception class and make a good adjustment to the middle school on transfer. The school takes effective steps to ensure that the pupils attend regularly.

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?

The headteacher and assistant headteacher work well together and provide strong leadership, which ensures that ambition and the desire to improve is embedded in its work. They are supported well by a well-led and well-organised governing body, which takes a keen interest in the school. The governing body uses its expertise effectively, makes regular visits and has a good perception of the school’s strengths

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and its areas for further development. It challenges and holds the school to account for its performance.

The school development plan, which draws on parents', carers', staff's and the governing body's views, is well written, with a clear focus on teaching and learning. The tasks to reach the stated initiatives are detailed. Informal and formal monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observations ensures that strengths in teaching are recognised and aspects that need attention are drawn to staff's notice.

The school engages well with its pupils' parents and carers. The parents and carers receive good information about their children's progress, through reading and writing target booklets. In addition to the formal twice-yearly parents' evenings and annual report, they have termly opportunities to visit the school at work and share what the pupils have been doing. Homework projects and the work that pupils will engage in during the term are communicated effectively. Partnerships with other schools, including the federated school, and engagement in local authority initiatives support the pupils' learning effectively. Joint professional development and the use of shared learning schemes are just two of the ways in which the school benefits from the federation. Good attention is paid to equal opportunities in those examples and also in the internal organisation of learning. There is no evidence of discrimination in any of the school's activities.

Community cohesion is good, particularly in relation to the local community. Pupils have visited places of worship for different faiths in Bedfordshire. The school is now working to improve pupils' understanding of the global aspect of diversity. Safeguarding is good because child protection arrangements are securely in place and there is a wide range of carefully worded and thought-through policies to secure the pupils' health, safety and general care.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for	2

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money

Early Years Foundation Stage

Teaching and learning and the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The children make satisfactory progress. The children reach standards which are about average overall, but with a considerable range between different children. The staff keep careful and well-annotated notes of the children’s progress and record what the children can do and where they do not yet have a full understanding. The staff have yet to realise the full benefit of the notes in the planning of future activities to develop each child to his/her full potential. Good attention is paid to the different aspects of learning and the children have lots of opportunities for free choice. The staff do not, however, always engage with the children well enough in the practical activities to develop the children’s thinking and to promote their vocabulary. The environment is neat and ordered and children’s work is valued. Early reading skills are taught well and the children learn to blend three-letter words from the sounds that they know.

Staff compensate for the very limited area directly outside the classroom with playground sessions that afford the use of large equipment, but the full potential of learning activities is not always exploited fully. Nevertheless, during the inspection good use was made of puddles brought by overnight rain. The children dropped powder paint into the puddles and watched the change of colours as others were added. They were then astonished to see the colours disappear with the addition of washing up liquid. They had great fun working and showed good team skills washing away the foam with a hose pipe.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

The percentage of questionnaires returned was higher than is usual. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and the great majority express positive views. A few parents and carers feel that they are not provided with enough information about their children’s progress. The inspection finds that the school provides ample opportunities in various ways to keep the parents and carers informed of progress in different aspects of work and is always ready to discuss progress at other times. A few had concerns about behaviour and meeting their children’s particular needs. Behaviour is good and the staff work hard to ensure that

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work matches the level of ability. Some parents and carers added written comments, most of which were favourable. The very few less positive remarks were personal to their own children and there was no theme to these.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kymbrook 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	70	11	25	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	14	32	24	55	6	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	39	21	48	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	57	14	32	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	16	36	24	55	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	43	23	52	1	2	1	2
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)	24	55	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	41	21	48	5	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	27	27	61	5	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	25	25	57	4	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	57	13	30	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	25	57	15	34	3	7	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



23 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kymbrook Lower School, Bedford, MK44 2HH

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and also we enjoyed the two days that we spent with you. Thank you for talking to us about your school and sharing your work with us. You attend a good school. You do lots of exciting things. Your parents and carers are pleased that you attend Kymbrook.

You behave well and you look after each other. Clearly, you enjoy school a great deal. The staff take good care of you and work hard to make your lessons interesting. I know how much you enjoyed the 'Dungeons and Dragons' theme.

You make good progress and often reach a standard above that expected for your age. We found that you do not make quite as much progress in writing as you do in reading and mathematics and so we have asked the school to try and help you to make better progress in this part of your work. The staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage plan the work so that the children have a wide range of activities, but we found that, in this part of the school, you could learn more and so make quicker progress. We have asked the staff to look at this. You can help in the improvements suggested by working hard in your writing, remembering what you are taught and using the targets that you have to improve your work.

Thank you once again for your help when we visited. We will remember our visit to your school for a long time. Work hard and always do your best.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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