

Linslade Lower School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109515
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	377934
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Edward Wheatley

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Meers
Headteacher	Hazel Farlam & Debra Cannings
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Leopold Road Linslade Leighton Buzzard LU7 2QU
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Introduction

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley

Additional inspector

Anthony Green

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed ten teachers, and visited 24 lessons or parts of lessons. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils, and inspectors spoke to parents bringing their children to school. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at achievement information, development planning and self-evaluation. They also took into account questionnaires from 105 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Linslade Lower is an average-sized school. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of educational need is below average. There is privately managed pre-school provision which is being inspected separately. From September 2011 the role of headteacher has been shared between two people.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Linslade Lower is a good school where pupils achieve well. The school is good rather than outstanding because occasionally teaching is not challenging enough to ensure pupils make the best progress they can. Sometimes pupils' handwriting is untidy and their spelling and punctuation is inaccurate.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4 pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds make good progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage also make good progress.
- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Lessons are usually challenging and interesting although sometimes work is not fully matched to pupils' learning needs. The curriculum provides a rich range of experiences for pupils, though opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) are sometimes missed. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. Unacceptable behaviour is rare; pupils are well cared for and the school makes sure they are safe.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses. The management of teachers' performance is rigorous, with a sustained drive to eliminate weaknesses and to support staff with effective professional development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment, and reinforce literacy skills, by ensuring pupils:
 - spell and punctuate their work accurately
 - always produce good quality handwriting.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - work is always matched to the learning needs of all pupils
 - adults make sure all pupils join in discussions

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- there are many opportunities for pupils, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to work independently and make decisions about their own learning
- there are planned opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is above average and rising. Past underperformance in mathematics has now caught up with that in English. By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils reading skills are above the expected levels. Pupils read fluently and systematically break down words they do not recognise into separate sounds in order to pronounce them accurately. They enjoy reading. They write well, using complex sentence structures. They understand how to use connectives, adjectives and adverbs, and how these enhance the quality of their writing. Nevertheless, the quality of their work is sometimes spoiled by careless spelling and punctuation, and untidy handwriting. In mathematics, attainment has improved because pupils have gained good basic number skills and regularly practise mental calculations which give them confidence in the successful way they deal with mathematical problems.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points. Their rate of progress is increasing, the most able pupils do well and boys and girls make equally good progress. Pupils enjoy work and like being challenged. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson where pupils were working out the cost of a school trip to a local canal museum, all pupils were fully engaged and motivated because it was 'a real life problem'. The level of discussion about the cost of different size coaches, how many coaches would be needed and the cost per pupil was intense and pupils' learning was exceptionally good. As pupils left the lesson, they were still discussing the costs, the trip, and were surprised at how complicated it was to organise a trip. Occasionally, pupils' progress slows a little when work does not stretch them, and in these cases pupils do what is expected of them, but do not fully engage with their learning. Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make good progress because they often work closely with other pupils and gain confidence in their ability to do well. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language makes good progress, because staff provide key language support where necessary and other pupils include them in small group work.

Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly average skills and make good progress. They have good social skills; they play and work together well. Their development of literacy, numeracy and other skills is good. Occasionally, adults give children too much direction in what they are doing.

Parents and carers are generally pleased with the progress their children make.

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Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that their children are taught well. Inspectors found this to be generally true with good and occasionally excellent teaching. The great majority of lessons are well planned with interesting activities, and a fast pace of learning. The learning needs of pupils are generally well met, with work based on accurate assessment of pupils' progress and their abilities. In the best lessons teachers often negotiate with pupils about whether they need further support to consolidate the work they have completed. Teachers ask searching questions and pupils are expected to explain their ideas fully. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 lesson on the characteristics of language that show suspense in stories, the teacher asked pupils to identify the words and features in a given text that described the suspense in a story. Pupils accurately explained the use of punctuation, short sentences, noises and silences, and produced their own words and sentences to convey suspense. The teacher ensured that all pupils made good progress in widening their understanding of sentence construction and vocabulary. Where new vocabulary was required the teacher provided it and made sure pupils knew what it meant. Pupils' learning was good, and they were thoroughly engaged in the activity. However, in some lessons, teachers do not engage pupils effectively; they give them too much information, and sometimes do not ensure that all pupils participate in discussions. Occasionally, teachers do not plan work that is sufficiently demanding, and the pace of pupils' progress falters briefly. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally good, and pupils know their targets, how well they are doing and how to improve. The teaching of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is good because adults provide good guidance and many opportunities for pupils to work independently.

The curriculum provides activities that engage all pupils in learning. It is enriched by trips, for example, to local canals to see how they work and research into the history of canals in Britain, and visits to a natural history museum to study dinosaurs. Special activities in school, for example, Olympic art day, Africa day, science week and Roman week further enhance pupils' learning and make significant contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Literacy and numeracy activities are well established in all subjects, and although opportunities for ICT are improving, they are not quite as well established as those for literacy and numeracy. There is a wide range of out-of-school activities to further engage pupils' interests. For example, pottery, Leo's chef, singing and cheerleading clubs are well supported by pupils.

The teaching and organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils have ready access to outside and inside facilities, and there are many opportunities for children to learn independently and to choose the activities they do. Activities are well organised to enable pupils to develop their social, literacy and numeracy skills. However, occasionally adults give too much direction to pupils, and briefly stifle their independence and enthusiasm.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They know how to stay safe in the playground and in practical lessons. Their attendance is above average. Despite a small number of parents' concerns, bullying and disruption to learning are unusual. Pupils say that on the few occasions that behaviour is unacceptable, or in exceeding rare incidents of bullying, the school deals with them effectively with minimal disruption to learning. Inspection evidence bears this out. Relationships are good and pupils are confident they can turn to any adult for help. Pupils have a sound understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and the use of homophobic or racist language. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously; members have been organising an Olympic torch day, sports relief collections, and providing mats in the cloakrooms. The support for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is very good and involves parents and carers at all stages of review of their children's progress and target setting. Care for those pupils and families who may find themselves in a vulnerable position is good.

Leadership and management

The headteachers provide good direction for the school to improve. Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the school's weaknesses. They have accurately identified spelling, punctuation and handwriting as areas for improvement. Leaders have implemented effective procedures to promote improved teaching of literacy and numeracy so that gaps in performance have narrowed quickly. All staff strive and succeed in ensuring that all pupils achieve well. The school has effective strategies particularly through its personal, social and health education programme to promote equality and successfully deal with all forms of discrimination. Procedures to eliminate occasional inadequate teaching are effective; staff value the help and professional development opportunities they receive. The governing body monitors the school's performance effectively, and helps drive improvements. For example, recently it has funded new computer equipment to improve provision across the curriculum. It is also supporting the drive to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage buildings. Plans for repairs and improvement are advanced, and address the health concerns raised by some parents and carers. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

The shared role of headship is relatively new. It has rapidly made a positive impact on helping raise levels of attainment. A small number of parents expressed concerns about communication between the headteachers; this is improving and there is now a coherent view of school policy. Parents and carers are mostly pleased with the education and experience the school provides for pupils. One, reflecting the views of many, wrote, 'My children are both thriving academically and socially, and are extremely happy at school'. Parents and carers support the school well, raising significant funds for school equipment. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Pupils are aware of the need to be alert to anything that concerns them and to report them to adults. Leaders ensure a rich, enjoyable curriculum that promotes effective learning. The opportunities for pupils to study different cultures are good

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and contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linslade Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2QU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school and sharing your views with us. We think your school is good. Your progress is rapid and improving.

The following things are particular strengths of your school.

- Teaching is good and occasionally excellent. You enjoy learning, and the wide range of interesting activities the school organises.
- The headteachers, staff and governing body work hard to make sure the school improves.
- You behave well and your attendance is good.
- You say there is very little bullying. You know what the different forms of bullying are. You know that any rare event of bullying is sorted out rapidly. You know how to stay safe.
- The school takes good care of you.

In order for your school to continue to improve, we have asked your teachers to make sure that:

- your work is always challenging
- you spell and punctuate your work correctly
- your handwriting is neat and easy to read
- adults make sure you join in discussions about what you are learning
- you all have opportunities to work independently and to make decisions about your own learning
- you have opportunities to use computers in all subjects.

You can help by telling teachers if you find work easy, making sure you spell and punctuate work accurately, and by writing neatly. You can also try to join in discussions when you have the chance to.

Yours sincerely

Edward Wheatley
Lead inspector

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