

# INSPECTION REPORT

**URSULA TAYLOR LOWER SCHOOL**

Clapham

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109597

Headteacher: Mrs M Carline

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Brackstone  
21872

Dates of inspection: 16 – 17 October 2000

Inspection number: 224607

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Ursula Taylor Lower School
School category:	First School
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Clapham Bedfordshire
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E-mail address:	ursultatay1@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Cheshire
Date of previous inspection:	03/02/97

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>10</b>
High standards are achieved by the pupils.	
Teaching is very good throughout the school.	
The headteacher provides very good leadership.	
Pupils' attitudes are very positive to work and behaviour is of a very high standard.	
Very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	
The care of the pupils' welfare and personal, social and academic development is very good.	
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>12</b>
Spellings in some subjects are frequently mis-spelt and not checked by teachers.	
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>13</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ursula Taylor Lower School is a small school with 198 pupils on roll. It caters for pupils aged four to nine who are accommodated in seven classes. A small percentage of these classes have mixed ages within them. In recent years the school has experienced falling rolls but the current trend is now upwards. The children are admitted once a year at the start of academic year in which they will be five. Younger children start on a part-time basis but all become full-time by the beginning of the spring term. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is 7 per cent and this is below the national average. Approximately 4 per cent of pupils use English as a second language and this is higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is 6.7 per cent and this is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements is 2.4 per cent and this is above the national average. The pupils come from the local village, which is a mixture of both private and locally owned accommodation. A small number of pupils travel from further afield such as the town of Bedford and the village of Kempston. Many of the children come from families who have lived in the local village of Clapham for generations and are very proud of their connections with the school. Some new housing developments have been recently built very near the school and this has brought in more pupils whose parents have professional backgrounds. The socio-economic status of the intake is broadly average. Levels of attainment on entry to school are very mixed but are below those expected for their age.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school. Pupils achieve high standards because the quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. The headteacher has very clear educational direction and is well supported by the governing body. A strong emphasis is placed on continuous improvement to ensure the school's aims are met. The school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- At age seven, pupils achieve high standards in National Curriculum tests. At age nine pupils achieve standards above those found nationally. The headteacher, teachers and governors are strongly committed to sustaining these high standards. Pupils are well prepared for National Curriculum tests.
- Very good teaching is well supported by the effective efforts of non-teaching staff.
- The headteacher is a very good leader who is well supported by the governors and staff in developing the school by constantly evaluating its work, setting challenging targets for improvement and priorities for action.
- Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes to their work. They get on very well with each other and this makes a powerful contribution to their good progress and enjoyment of school. Attendance and punctuality are good and pupils like coming to school.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- It takes very good care of its pupils' welfare and personal, social and academic development.

#### **What could be improved**

- The high standards of marking in English are not consistently applied across the curriculum; spellings in some subjects are frequently mis-spelt and not checked by teachers.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997 and has made a good improvement since then. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Each of the key issues identified has been tackled effectively and successfully and the school continues to seek to improve in the identified aspects. A particular area of improvement has been the provision for the youngest children and this is now of a high standard.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	C	C	A	B
Mathematics	B	C	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

This is a good set of results that shows ongoing improvement. In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected or higher levels in English and mathematics were well above average. They were above average for similar schools in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority of children achieve standards expected for their age by the end of the foundation stage. Results of recent standardised testing do not reflect this improving trend. This is because many Year 2 pupils who took the tests in the year 2000 had summer birthdays and were obviously still under seven when the tests were taken. A significant minority of the pupils in this year group also had special educational needs. During the inspection, standards observed in English and mathematics were above average and this confirms the high levels of work achieved. A particularly good feature is the standard of handwriting and presentation. The school is well placed to improve its standards further.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Both boys and girls are very positive about school and are keen to learn. They apply themselves to work set them and they work happily and constructively together.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour throughout the school makes a very significant contribution to the standards achieved and the happy, ordered atmosphere of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Everybody gets on very well together and visitors are made to feel very welcome. Adults act as very good role models and help to foster the family feel of the school.

Attendance	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually.
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Pupils make a very strong contribution to their own achievement and to the ordered, optimistic and positive feel of the school by the way they do all that is expected of them in and out of lessons.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
13 lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses*

The quality of teaching is very good and is a significant strength of the school. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good throughout the school. A particularly good emphasis is placed on helping the youngest children to develop their speaking and listening skills. Literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Lessons are carefully planned and resourced well. The effective use of assessment ensures that the needs of all pupils are met. During the inspection, all lessons were good or better in quality. Of these, 62 per cent of the lessons observed were of very good quality. Teachers' high expectations and interesting lessons promote pupils' enthusiasm. Pupils' concentrate and respond very well. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All statutory requirements are met and there is an appropriate emphasis on the basis literacy and numeracy skills. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including sport and music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is good support from teachers and non-teaching staff. Work is carefully designed to enable pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are well supported which ensures that they are given equal access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. There is a strong emphasis on Christian values and pupils have good opportunities for reflection. They have a very good understanding of moral and social responsibilities. They have a good appreciation of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring the health and safety of its pupils are very good.

Planning at all levels is of high quality as is the quality of care about all aspects of pupils' development.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher is committed to achieving higher standards in National Curriculum tests and the school is led very well. Management is good. The school development plan is clearly focused on improvement and financial resources are used effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. Governors are supportive and keen for the school to succeed. Procedures and committee structures are well established and governors are committed to supporting the school to achieve the highest standards in National Curriculum tests.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. Careful evaluation of National Curriculum tests provides the school with precise information to set targets. The school monitors the quality of teaching and this ensures that improvement is sustained.
The strategic use of resources	Compared to national figures, the school receives a low income. However, the school makes good use of its limited funds to maintain high standards.

The school applies the principles of best value and it is constantly comparing itself against good practice.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• They feel that the school expects their children to work hard.</li> <li>• They feel that the teaching is good.</li> <li>• They feel that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The vast majority of parents are happy with the behaviour of children in school.</li> <li>• Most parents feel happy about approaching the school with a question or a problem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority of parents do not feel that the school works closely with them.</li> <li>• A small minority of parents do not feel that the school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• A small minority of parents do not feel that they are sufficiently informed about the progress of their children.</li> <li>• A small minority of parents do not feel that their children receive the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>

Inspection findings support the positive views of the parents but do not justify the negative comments. In discussion with a significant number of parents during the inspection it was evident that the school works closely with them and they are well informed about the progress that their children make. The annual report on their children is comprehensive, and two formal occasions are available for parents to discuss their children's work with staff. Pupils are provided with a good range of extra-curricular

activities that include both sport and music. Pupils are also given an appropriate amount of homework, which is commensurate with their stage of education.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**At the age of seven, pupils achieve above average results in National Curriculum tests. At the age of nine pupils achieve standards above those found nationally; the headteacher, teacher and governors are strongly committed to sustaining these high standards. Pupils are well prepared for National Curriculum tests.**

The pupils enjoy listening to stories and quickly learn to read. By the age of seven, they know how to tackle unfamiliar words and enjoy reading different forms of writing such as stories, poems, recipes and instructions. By age nine, the pupils are reading for pleasure and gather information to extend their own knowledge. Reading is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum.

Pupils make good progress in writing. The younger children develop control of writing tools, take care to form letters in the correct way and begin to write familiar words. By the age of seven, pupils write sentences that are mostly correctly punctuated with a capital letter and a full stop. By the age of nine, pupils write extended sentences, using more elaborate ways in which to join ideas. For example, they know what a verb and adjective is and talk confidently about singular and plural words. They are also using speech marks to depict the spoken word and this makes their stories interesting and realistic. Pupils have good opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences. They understand drafting and work is presented neatly. There is a wealth of writing in various forms, including creative stories, poems, detailed instructions, factual accounts and different types of letters.

Younger children in the school develop a good understanding of mathematics. Teachers provide a good range of mathematical activities, including the use of information technology, to reinforce and extend learning. In the reception classes, pupils count up to numbers beyond 20 and count on in twos. Pupils in Year 1 know doubled numbers up to 20 and add three numbers together. By the age of seven, pupils understand place value. They add two digit numbers together to make a three-digit number. By the age of nine, pupils show a secure mental agility and understanding of a range of mathematical terms. They confidently recognise regular and irregular two-dimensional shapes and describe the number of sides and corners with accuracy. The teaching provides a breadth of experiences for pupils, which reinforces and extends their understanding and confidence.

Parents have very high expectations of the school. The headteacher, teachers, and governing body are strongly committed to providing opportunities for pupils to reach the highest standards. They have devised effective systems for tracking the progress pupils make. They use a range of standardised tests and they note those who need extra support so that pupils of all levels of attainment make the best possible progress.

**Very good teaching is well supported by the effective efforts of non-teaching staff.**

Continued high standards in English and mathematics are a result of very good teaching by class teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers work very hard; lessons are always very well prepared and they manage their pupils very well. They are aware of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and keep very good records to monitor progress. Teachers give clear expositions, they question the pupils very effectively and this helps them recall previous learning. For example, in a very good mathematics lesson in the Year 3 / 4 class, the teacher very carefully recapped the pupils' knowledge on two-dimensional shapes through a rigorous question and answer session. Lessons always move along at a brisk pace with plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their learning to new situations and problem solving. Work is well planned and prepared so that it is well

matched to the needs of the various groups and individuals. All adults involved are constantly monitoring levels of understanding and the information is regularly used to set and modify targets. Teachers give generously of their time to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities such as recorder groups, football and chess clubs.

**The headteacher is a very good leader who is well supported by the governors and staff in developing the school by constantly evaluating its work, setting challenging targets for improvement and priorities for action.**

The headteacher is very clear about the educational direction of the school and is constantly seeking ways in which the school can improve. For example, a significant amount of money has been carried forward to enable an additional teacher to be employed in the future and reduce class sizes in Key Stage 2. She is well supported by the staff and the vast majority of governors who share in the vision and aims clearly promoted by the school. The head is very aware of the need for staff to gain further experience and is always willing to arrange visits to other schools and bring in outside expertise. She delegates real responsibility and teachers are encouraged to develop their expertises and management roles which they have done to good effect by leading developments in their areas of responsibility.

The involvement of governors has improved since the last inspection and they make a positive contribution. Although several of the present body are new to the job, lines of communication are well established. Procedures have enabled governors to continue to be active in their role as informed and critical friends of the school. The relationship between the head and the vast majority of governors and parents is characterised by trust and confidence.

In their drive to match best practice, the school makes good use of all its available information, including baseline and national testing to determine where the efforts of the school community could be best directed to effect overall improvement. Targets in the development plan focus on the actions needed to effect specific real gains in standards whilst maintaining provision throughout the school. Priorities are set in spending, use of time and staff development to meet these targets and success is measured against them. The determination of the headteacher that the school should not stand still, has ensured its ethos is one where children and adults are all challenged to improve and grow through self-knowledge.

**Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes to their work.**

Pupils make a very good contribution to their own learning and the success of the school by being keen and enthusiastic about their work. They behave well without the need for constant reminders or supervision and by getting along well with everyone else in the school. For example, assemblies are very orderly sessions where pupils value the effort of others and respond as an audience in both an attentive and interested manner. The school ensures that everyone is very clear about how things are done at Ursula Taylor and all pupils are secure and confident as they move about their class and the school. As a result, little time or effort is wasted in non-productive activities and the school community is able to concentrate its efforts on doing even better.

Even the youngest children understand the conventions of whole class discussions and will listen and wait their turn knowing that their contribution will be valued. Groups get on busily and work together happily without the needs for an adult to supervise them. Pupils like coming to school; there is a high level of attendance. Pupils arrive punctually for school and lessons start promptly.

Good attention is given to the planning of all activities. The use of adults working alongside groups also helps them to maintain concentration. Well-matched work and sensitive support ensures that all pupils

are able to succeed at their own levels which gives them the confidence to keep going and take on further challenges. Very good behaviour and work and acts of kindness are rewarded in a variety of ways and pupils are aware that their best efforts will be appreciated. Moral and social issues are confidently discussed both in class and in assemblies and this ensures that the pupils have a very good understanding of rightness and fairness.

**The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.**

The school consciously focuses on pupils' personal development. There is a strong emphasis on Christian values and pupils have good opportunities for reflection. Both boys and girls are given very good opportunities to understand both moral and social responsibilities. They are clearly aware of the sanctions and rewards that are in place. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for routine tasks such as collecting books. In lessons they are encouraged to work together and support each other. The whole ethos and relationships between all in the school provide the pupils with very good opportunities to develop their moral and social skills. They have a good appreciation of different cultures and are given appropriate opportunities to develop an understanding of the diversity and richness of other cultures.

**It takes very good care of its pupils' welfare and personal, social and academic development.**

The level of care that the school extends to its pupils is very good. All policies and procedures are clear and well known by everyone who needs to know and the school has ensured that more than adequate numbers of adults have the necessary skills to deal with emergencies or ensure children's safety.

The school takes great care to promote and monitor the pupils' personal, social and academic progress. Staff collect and record detailed information on all these aspects meticulously, and use this information on all aspects systematically. The information enables them to ensure that everything is being done to help the individual child to do as well as he or she can. Attendance is not a problem but a close watch is kept on the registers to ensure that it does not become one. Regular targets are set and recorded for each child and progress towards them is monitored. Parents are kept fully informed about every aspect of their children's development to ensure that nothing is missed and that everyone is working towards the same objectives.

**WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**The high standards of marking in English are not consistently applied across the curriculum; spellings in some subjects are frequently mis-spelt and not checked by teachers.**

Although pupils' spellings are marked consistently well in literacy sessions, this is not evident in other subjects. For example, in mathematics pupils' work is regularly marked throughout the school. Accurate calculations and problems are marked appropriately with a tick and good quality work is frequently highlighted by positive comments from the teacher. Pupils conscientiously carry out mathematical corrections. However, the quality of the marking is weakened in both key stages because spellings are not corrected. For instance, words such as triangle, cuboids and rectangle are spelt incorrectly and pupils are not made aware of their mistakes. As a result, they continue to make the same mistakes time after time in their mathematics books. This also happens in geography where common words such as climate are mis-spelt and not corrected.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

To build on its high standards and very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Formulate a marking policy that ensures that spellings in all subjects across the curriculum are checked for accuracy.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	62	38	0	0	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		181
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		21

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		22

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.08
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	8	16	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	7	8
	Girls	15	15	14
	Total	21	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (81)	92 (86)	92 (87)
	National	82 (74)	83 (80)	87 (83)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	22	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (80)	92 (97)	92 (97)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	3
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	130
Any other minority ethnic group	4

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.2:1
Average class size	25.9

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	134

*FTE means full-time equivalent*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	297,391
Total expenditure	288,901
Expenditure per pupil	1651
Balance brought forward from previous year	37,159
Balance carried forward to next year	45,649

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	181
Number of questionnaires returned	79

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	1	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	47	5	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	53	1	0	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	53	11	3	15
The teaching is good.	54	39	0	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	47	14	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	25	4	5	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	56	0	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	25	51	14	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	34	51	6	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	44	15	4	10

### **Other issues raised by parents**

At the meeting with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, parents expressed some concern over the progress made by their children when they were placed in mixed age group classes. Inspectors found that all pupils to be working at levels commensurate with their age and ability and could see no justification in their concern.