



Ridgmont Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109476
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278201
Inspection dates 22 September 2005 to 23 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Colin Henderson LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Community		MK43 0TS
Age range of pupils	3 to 10		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525280236
Number on roll	67	Fax number	01525280236
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Ashley Knight
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Lynda Clark

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is located in an attractive rural setting, near the Woburn Abbey Estate. It has 36 boys and 31 girls on roll, with 10 three-year-olds attending part-time. Two pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The school has a very low staff turnover, although a new headteacher began at the start of this term. Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although it varies significantly each year as the numbers of children are small.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that serves its community well and is valued highly by parents and pupils. It has made very good progress since the last inspection, especially in raising the standards in spelling and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils achieve well as a result of consistently good teaching, their enthusiastic attitudes to learning and the good care, support and guidance provided. The good Foundation Stage helps children to settle happily into school life and many attain standards that are above nationally expected levels when they enter Year 1. Pupils attain well above average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Teachers use good assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science to meet pupils' different learning needs, although procedures are less effective in other subjects. Pupils like coming to school as staff value individual pupils and encourage them to achieve well. Behaviour is outstanding and is clearly reflected in the way pupils look after each other. Parents are seen as true partners in their children's learning and greatly appreciate the willingness of staff to co-operate with them. Leadership and management are good and the new headteacher has a strong base on which to develop the school further. The school's capacity to improve is good. There is a good staff team and the contribution of the governing body is outstanding. Subject leadership and management have improved. Self-evaluation is more effective, although the monitoring of teaching is not consistently rigorous enough. The school gives good value for money. The inspection findings reveal a good school, better than its own rather cautious evaluation as satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of monitoring and evaluation procedures to extend pupils' learning;
- Extend the effective use of assessment to a broader range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress, confirming the school's judgement. The children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of learning and many attain above expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. The very recent initiative in admitting three year olds part-time is proving successful as most have already adjusted well to school life and are making good progress in their early learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. They attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 that are well above average, both nationally and compared with similar schools. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 build successfully on their prior learning and attain well above nationally expected levels by the time they leave the school, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils attaining standards that are above those expected for their age in Year 2 and Year 4 is high. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from high quality individual support and make good progress towards their learning targets. Most attain standards expected of their age. Pupils are

doing better than at the last inspection, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT. Their economic well-being is developed effectively and they are prepared well for their next school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good with outstanding features. The school has a strong focus on meeting individual pupils' needs and this results in pupils considerably enjoying learning and achieving well. They are enthusiastic to learn and their behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is good and pupils love coming to school very much. They value the safe and caring atmosphere. They say that it is a friendly school with little bullying or discrimination and inspection findings agree. There is a strong sense of community and pupils feel that their views are valued and used well to improve the school. For example, the school council makes an outstanding contribution to providing a safe and enjoyable working learning environment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school makes very good use of school assemblies, its links with the church and personal, social and health education lessons to promote personal development well, especially social and moral aspects. This is reflected clearly in the school prayer, written by a pupil, which reminds pupils each day to 'help us care for one another as we work and play'. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultural beliefs and practices, for example, by visiting a Sikh Gurdwara. The reason for the school's Healthy Schools Award is evident in pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles and their involvement in a good range of sports.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspection findings agree that teaching and learning are good in all classes. They are key factors in helping pupils to achieve well. Teachers know their pupils very well and use regular assessments to plan lessons carefully to meet their learning needs in literacy and numeracy. They are particularly successful in using good resources to extend pupils' spelling skills. Teachers provide a good range of interesting activities, although they do not use assessments so effectively in some subjects, such as history and geography, to build consistently on earlier learning. Teachers use clear explanations to capture pupils' interest and work very effectively with teaching assistants to support and extend pupils' skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitude and work and they respond well. Most teachers maintain a brisk pace to lessons, and sustain pupils' attention. They do not always remind pupils what they are trying to achieve to ensure that they stay focused and achieve their learning objective by the end of the lesson. Teachers mark pupils' work effectively, showing clear points for improvement. They identify specific improvement targets for each pupil and share them with pupils and their parents. This contributes well to raising standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a lively and interesting curriculum. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. However, as well as the required subjects, the school has introduced French and uses some innovative methods that capture pupils' attention and enthusiasm for learning. For example, teachers use ability groups in numeracy across the two older classes for part of the year. This has raised standards as well as stimulating pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. The ICT curriculum has improved hugely since the last inspection as a result of the contribution of a specialist ICT technician. Extra-curricular activities are good, particularly in sports, and enhance pupils' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. Pupils are really enthusiastic about how the curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors to extend their skills and knowledge in a broad range of activities, for example, dance and music. The curriculum is good and this reflects the school's judgement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good, with some aspects of care being outstanding. This reflects the school's judgement. The school provides a secure, happy and supportive environment in which staff and pupils care for each other and promote healthy lifestyles. Staff know their pupils very well and pupils are confident about approaching any adult if they have a worry. Child protection procedures are fully in place and all staff know how to raise concerns. The school works very well with other agencies, such as the Vandyke Support Scheme, to provide high quality support in promoting pupils' personal development, particularly the welfare of vulnerable pupils. Parents value greatly the efforts made to involve them in the personal and academic development of their children. For example, they are encouraged to support their children in achieving their improvement targets. Teachers use assessments well to identify pupils' individual improvement targets. These are reviewed regularly to check on progress, although pupils do not always understand what they specifically have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is accurate in its view that leadership and management are good. The progress since the last inspection has been very good, with a clear and consistent focus on raising standards. The strong staff team and a very effective governing body have agreed what they want their school to achieve and have used good self-evaluation procedures to check its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. A good school development plan, to which staff, pupils and governors all contribute, provides a clear direction to the work of the school. This has established a firm base for the new headteacher and the capacity for improvement is good. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning have improved since the last

inspection, especially in mathematics. Key subject leaders use lesson observations well to improve teaching, although they do not evaluate it rigorously enough to check how it has improved pupils' achievement. The school uses assessment information effectively to track pupils' progress and to set predicted targets for their achievement by the end of the year. Subject managers in English and mathematics use assessment and review weeks each term to check on how well pupils are doing, although the results are not used to check that the predicted targets are still challenging enough. The effectiveness of the governing body has improved considerably and governors make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. They have drawn up their own manual to specify clearly their roles and how to carry them out. They use lesson observations, meetings with staff and pupils and questionnaires to parents and pupils to inform their judgements. They make very good use of funds to support key priorities and evaluate how well the monies have been spent.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to so many of you and looking at your work. I was very impressed with the way in which you behave and care for each other. All your teachers and other members of staff are really kind and work hard to make sure that you are happy in school and interested in your work. I agree with your views that it is a good school and that your teachers care a lot about you. Your school has improved a great deal since its last inspection. It is now a better place in which to learn and you are achieving higher standards, especially in your spelling and computer skills. The people in charge of the school have put a good deal of energy into making it a good place to learn and the work of your governors is excellent. Teachers teach you well and you clearly enjoy both your lessons and the good range of trips and extra-curricular activities. The good support given by teachers and teaching assistants helps you to achieve well, especially those of you who enjoy challenging work. Most of you try hard to achieve your learning targets, although I have suggested that teachers check that you understand what you actually need to do to achieve your targets. I have asked Mrs Clark, the new headteacher, and her staff to look carefully at each others' teaching to see if they can help you to achieve even better. I have also asked them to check more regularly on how well you are doing in some of the other subjects, as well as reading, writing and mathematics. Best wishes for the future and I am confident that your school will continue to improve.