



Shefford Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109479
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278202
Inspection dates 20 October 2005 to 21 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Glynn Storer LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Community		SG17 5XA
Age range of pupils	3 to 10		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 629123
Number on roll	291	Fax number	01462 628844
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.V Kerlin
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Tracey Callender

Age group 3 to 10	Inspection dates 20 October 2005 - 21 October 2005	Inspection number 278202
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three additional inspectors, with the support and co-operation of pupils, staff and governors of the school.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves all of the community of Shefford, a small town some nine miles from Bedford. Most pupils live in the immediate area, although some come from further afield. About 95% are from white British families. The others are from other white or mixed heritage backgrounds, but virtually all speak English as their main language. This is a community where levels of social and economic disadvantage are quite low. Generally, pupils are well cared for and parents take an interest in their progress and happiness in school. Fewer than one in ten of all pupils are entitled to free school meals and when children enter the school, their knowledge and skills are broadly average for their age. However, during the last school year, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, was higher than that in similar schools. The school is currently undergoing extensive building works to improve the site and the facilities that it provides.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shefford Lower School is a good school. It gives its pupils a good start to their education and prepares them well for their on-going education and for life in the community. Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well and pupils in Years 1 to 4 continue to make good progress in most subjects. Standards in reading and writing are high but, even though progress is satisfactory, pupils do less well in mathematics. Pupils really enjoy learning because the curriculum is stimulating and most teaching is good. Consequently, attendance rates are above those in schools nationally. However, at present, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) as an aid to learning other subjects. Staff successfully build pupils' confidence and self-esteem and provide excellent standards of care. As a result, parents strongly support the school's efforts. The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful because standards of behaviour have improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher and her deputy provide excellent leadership. Senior staff and governors know how good the school is because systems for checking on the quality of the school's work are effective. They have demonstrated their ability to bring about improvement by dealing successfully with the issues raised by the previous inspection and are rightly planning more ways to raise standards in mathematics. The school is well placed to improve further and gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of the teaching of mental agility and of shape and measures in mathematics so that all pupils, but especially the most able, make the progress that they should.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use computers and other devices to improve the quality of their learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When the children start school in the nursery class their attainment is broadly average. They make good progress and by the time they leave the reception year, they attain standards that are above the level expected for their age in all areas of learning. Most pupils meet the challenging targets that the school sets. Consequently, in Years 1 to 4, pupils make very good progress in reading and writing, and attain exceptionally high standards in these areas in the national tests at the end of Year 2. Pupils of all abilities have very high levels of self-confidence. They speak very well, are fluent and expressive readers and imaginative writers. In mathematics, pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress. Standards are above average on the basis of the end of Year 2 national assessment results, and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, but are not as high as they could be. This is because the most able children are not always stretched to their full capacity in aspects of measure and in terms of

their mental agility. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to that of their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably and a striking feature of the school is how much pupils think their learning is fun. Consequently, attendance rates are good and pupils want to do their best. Most pupils choose healthy eating options and participate enthusiastically in the many physical activities that the school provides. The work of the school council promotes citizenship successfully. Pupils are proud to have influenced decisions about the provision of playground equipment and blinds in the school hall. Parents share the view that the school is at the centre of the community and that pupils enjoy contributing to it. Pupils know how to keep safe and have demonstrated this extremely well during the building works. Opportunities to work in teams, in pairs and independently prepare pupils extremely well for their life as young adults. For example, they are particularly excited about organising their own fundraising activities. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All adults provide excellent role models. Pupils respect and care well for each other because they are sensitive to things of beauty and to the feelings of others. They act on a clear understanding of right and wrong and appreciate the richness and diversity of cultures other than their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's view that teaching and learning are good. Teachers and other adults get on very well with the pupils. From nursery onwards, they work hard to build confidence and self-esteem, so that pupils join in willingly and are keen to learn. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers and classroom assistants manage occasional poor behaviour very effectively and so almost all pupils are attentive and do their best. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They provide a good range of interesting activities that motivate pupils to learn. However, there is scope for teachers to increase the use of ICT as an aid to learning across the curriculum. Teachers evaluate pupils' learning and modify their teaching so as to better meet the needs of all individuals or groups within the class. Pupils who have learning difficulties receive exceptionally good support. Staff include them fully in all that the school has to offer and so they achieve well. Assessment is regular and thorough and teachers' marking is particularly constructive in the way that it helps pupils to improve their work. Teachers use assessment information effectively to set challenging personal targets for all pupils. The teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing is particularly effective. Teachers build and reinforce pupils' skills systematically. However, the teaching of mathematics is less consistent. Some lessons lack pace and the demands

placed on pupils with different capabilities do not always ensure best progress for all, especially the most able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school that the curriculum is good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is good coverage of all subjects and a particularly good focus on literacy has contributed well to the raising of standards in reading and writing. The carefully planned curriculum is beginning to encourage pupils to be creative by making links between different subjects. However, provision should be further strengthened by developing the use of ICT across other areas of the curriculum. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is extremely effective. It is a key factor in the high standards of personal development that pupils achieve and prepares pupils well for the future. Pupils also benefit from an impressive range of educational visits, visitors, special events and out of school clubs and activities that bring learning to life, promote enjoyment and add to the overall quality of pupils' experience in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that its care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Staff successfully foster high standards of behaviour and extremely positive attitudes. Pupils achieve rewards for hard work and good behaviour and are really proud of their 'Values Tree'. The school provides an extremely secure environment, where levels of supervision are very good. Pupils are given the confidence to do their best to achieve challenging targets within an atmosphere of fun, which is greatly valued by pupils and parents. Pupils are clear about their targets and what they need to do to achieve them and there are regular opportunities for parents to meet teachers to discuss progress. Staff promote the health, safety and well-being of all pupils exceptionally well. Child protection procedures are thorough and all staff understand them. Teachers have an extremely good understanding of their pupils' pastoral needs and respond positively to them. The care and guidance provided for vulnerable pupils or for those who find their work more difficult is a strength of the school because of the high quality support provided by the school's talented teaching assistants. In this regard, staff provide a very high degree of equality of opportunity for virtually all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. In recent years, she has overseen a major building development, recruited high quality staff and provided the necessary training, time and support for those with management responsibilities to do a good job. As a result, the school is stronger at all levels, although more recent developments,

such as that aimed at raising standards in mathematics, have yet to impact fully on pupils' performance. The headteacher's purposeful approach, along with effective support from senior staff and governors, has been a key factor in improving staff morale, developing a shared sense of commitment and continuing the drive to improve standards and quality. The school's administrative staff do an excellent job. They contribute significantly to the efficiency of the school and to the high standards of care that the school provides to pupils and their parents. Arrangements for school self-evaluation are good because procedures for checking on aspects of the school's performance are thorough. Staff willingly accept the frequent monitoring that takes place because the headteacher has improved communication at all levels, so that the sharing of good practice has become the norm. In this respect, the deputy headteacher leads by example. Her skills as class teacher, along with her enthusiastic approach to all aspects of school life, inspire her colleagues and very effectively maintain the pace of improvement. The school is committed to improving its performance and its track record in this respect is good. Most improvement initiatives are successful because the school's planning identifies exactly what must be achieved before staff and governors can regard any target as met. Consequently, staff have successfully dealt with issues arising from its previous inspection. Furthermore, the school has already identified and begun to work on the areas for development that arise from this inspection. The strengthening of the management team puts the school in a good position to improve further.

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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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	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	1	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?	1	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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	2	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

You may remember that we, the inspectors, visited your school a little while ago. Thank you very much for making our visit so enjoyable, and for taking the time to talk to us and to answer our questions. We thought you would be interested to hear our findings. We think that your school is good because: - you work hard at your reading and writing and do very well in these subjects; - you really enjoy school because your teachers make lessons interesting; - you get on very well with one another and are keen to learn; - there are many clubs that you can attend after school; - your teachers and support staff help you when you have difficulties or problems and make sure that you are safe; - Mrs Callender and the teachers work hard to make the school a better place. Even though your school is good, there are some things that could be even better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that: - those of you who find maths easy are given harder work that helps them to make even more progress; - you have more time to work on the computers during lessons.