



Totternhoe Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109488
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278205
Inspection dates 6 October 2005 to 7 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. John Paull LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Road
School category	Community		LU6 1RE
Age range of pupils	4 to 10		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582662959
Number on roll	111	Fax number	01582 673826
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.G Kelly
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Janet Robinson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Housing in the area from which the pupils come is mixed, although most is privately owned. Children enter from several different pre-school settings, several coming from quite a distance away. Attainment on entry is broadly average, although more children are a little above what is usually found, than below. The range is wide, both within year groups and from one year to the next. Currently, attainment is above average in the Reception year. About 10% of pupils have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, which is lower than the national figure. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fewer than in most other schools nationally. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The view of staff, parents and pupils that Totternhoe is a good school is confirmed. It provides good value for money. The school's effectiveness results from good leadership and management. Evaluations of what is provided and achieved are accurate and in turn enable the school to establish a good basis for future improvement. Staff and governors consult openly with parents, pupils and the local authority to gather opinions and advice about standards and what is taught. This information is used thoroughly, alongside the school's own monitoring and analysis of performance to ensure that challenging plans and targets are set. Teaching is good throughout the school, including that in the Reception class, so quality and standards are also good at this age. Teaching is based on a solid curriculum that includes all nationally required subjects and areas of learning, although some links between subjects and aspects are not made sufficiently obvious for pupils to understand their significance. Nevertheless, what is provided enables pupil of different backgrounds and abilities to achieve well both socially and academically. Procedures to assess and track pupils' progress through the school are good. The identification of individual needs is strong and, although the school has only a few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with a travelling heritage, their needs are fully met. Special arrangements are made for pupils of particularly high attainment, as well as for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. By the time pupils leave, at the end of Year 4, overall standards are above average. Senior staff and governors operate well together in a climate of optimism and co-operation. When fluctuations in performance occur, especially if standards appear to fall, as happened a year ago, reasons are sought and decisive action is taken to correct the situation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum, so pupils receive more opportunities to understand and appreciate how knowledge in different subjects and aspects fit together. - In the Reception class, the plan the outside space to provide opportunities for children to acquire skills across the full range of areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 4, the standard of work of a large number of pupils exceeds what is normally expected, especially in English and mathematics. Much of the artwork and science work on display around the building is of very good quality, and singing is also good. Good achievement is evident in pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2. Results have remained above average in reading, writing and mathematics for several years, even on occasions when results were not quite as high as usual. When pupils first enter the school, many already possess well-developed skills in language and mathematical development. These skills are built on effectively, so by the time they enter Year 1, standards are above those normally expected. This pattern of good achievement continues, because teaching is good. The staff are well

aware of pupils with different needs, using information about pupils' progress well to establish what each one should learn next. Work is therefore geared closely to individual needs. Targets are challenging and realistic and largely met. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used well to support good achievement across the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. Attendance is better than the national average. Pupils accept responsibility and show initiative, which is an improvement since the last inspection, when not enough opportunities to do so were provided. They play, work and carry out helpful jobs in their classrooms and around the school. Through the school council, they take responsibility for many aspects of what affects them. Councillors themselves negotiated with staff about arrangements for playtimes, and they make sensible decisions about spending some funds that are devolved to them. Despite the concerns of one or two parents about rough play, the inspection has revealed that the playgrounds and new equipment are used well. Pupils feel that their new arrangements have contributed considerably to a recent improvement. When asked, nearly all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, agreed that they enjoy coming to school. They know that some items of food are better for them than others and that too much sun is bad for their skin. However, in subjects such as science or literacy, emphasis is not sufficiently placed on reasons, so their understanding is sometimes incomplete. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils of different backgrounds are proud of what they achieve and are gaining the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills necessary for future economic well-being. Social and emotional development is particularly good in the Reception class. Cultural development is strong throughout the school. Pupils demonstrated considerable interest in a display of musical instruments from Africa. They enjoyed handling these artefacts, and experimented respectfully to see what sounds they could make.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In all age groups, teachers and teaching assistants show strong consideration for pupils' needs. They ensure that they feel secure in class and that work is well matched to their needs and abilities. Pupils respond favourably, showing willingness to listen, learn and carry out the activities that are set. Progress and achievement are, therefore, good. What was seen in Year 1 offers a very telling example. Planning is geared to achieve a smooth transition from Reception. Teaching adopts methods that pupils would have met in this previous class. Good features include the use of a home corner, Holly Cottage, and construction kits for pupils to make three-dimensional structures that they design for themselves. As a result, they

feel comfortable in their new class and begin to learn as soon as they enter it. The school's thoughtful approach to teaching ensures that pupils develop the skills that they need. Attractive displays of pupils' work are very effective in setting questions, as well as in raising pupils' self-esteem. Effective teaching assistants often support pupils with learning difficulties, showing them how to progress towards their own targets. Gifted pupils are challenged effectively with suitably harder work. Good assessment procedures are used to draw conclusions about what pupils must do next. Senior managers monitor teaching accurately, and a good basis exists to develop teaching continuously.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

What is taught ensures adequately that pupils learn what they should and enjoy their work. Unnecessary repetition is avoided and enough time is available to develop essential skills. All subjects of the National Curriculum and other statutory requirements are planned fully. Teachers adapt work effectively, so the needs of different pupils, including those with learning difficulties are met. Good resources are available for pupils with disabilities, supporting learning well. When relevant occasions arise, teachers explain how learning in one subject can be applied to another. Nevertheless, planned themes and topics do not take enough account of this matter, so such opportunities to explore these links do not occur frequently enough. Planning, resources and displays are used well in the Reception classroom to contribute to learning in all the required areas. However, the school has correctly identified that the outdoor space does not provide a similar breadth. This is already identified as a priority in the school's development plan. Visitors and extra-curricular activity are strong features and provide much opportunity for achievement and enjoyment through the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All the staff are strongly aware of their responsibilities for ensuring safety. Risks are graded and arrangements made to guard against them according to severity. First-aiders are trained in techniques for use with young children. Procedures for child protection go beyond what is merely required, and include thoroughgoing arrangements for consultation with relevant agencies and governors. Good attention is paid to matters of health and safety in which pupils are involved in accepting responsibility as far as they can. For example, the staff encourage them to bring fruit for morning break and the school is included in the government's fruit and vegetable scheme. Systems to monitor academic and personal development, including an award system and celebration assembly, are good and what is done to reduce absences is outstandingly effective. Pupils with no absences receive free tickets to a local bowling rink as recognition of their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Management is good. Meetings, a school council, questionnaires and consultation with agencies of the local authority are used effectively to gather feedback about provision. This information is used alongside accurate evaluations of standards and results. In this way, plans about what to change and improve are constructed. Good leadership is evident in the success of the headteacher and assistant headteacher in explaining their ideas and involving governors in directing the required developments. Governors are supportive and visit the school regularly. They have good knowledge of its present performance, including its standards and trends. Good procedures identified a possible weakness in arrangements for inducting staff as a contributory factor behind a recent slight drop in standards, affecting Years 3 and 4 especially. Even though changes in staff settled down again, procedures were reviewed and more robust ideas were put into place to guard against any repetition. Assessments of pupils' progress are constantly updated and checked to identify individual pupils or groups that might require particular attention. This level of care has contributed strongly to standards that have remained consistently above average for many years and extends to pupils' personal development and well-being. Senior managers, including those with responsibility for the Reception year, and governors have brought about good improvement since the last inspection. Currently, they have identified the curriculum as the next aspect that requires attention. Based on their past performance, success in making positive changes is secure.

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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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	3	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	2	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	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

Thank you for being so polite and welcoming when I visited your school. I really did enjoy looking at your work and coming to your lessons. I especially enjoyed chatting with so many of you, whether in your classes, over lunch or in the playground, and with the school council, who were very helpful in our meeting. I also enjoyed talking to some of you about your reading books. What I like most about your school: - I think that you work very sensibly in your lessons and your skills in English, mathematics and science are good. - You sing well and your artwork is very good. - I also think that you behave well. - You are kind and thoughtful and the school councillors do a good job. - Your teachers teach you well and all the adults help you to feel safe and sound. What I have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to think about next: - To have a careful look at the different topics that they teach you, to help you see better how different parts are linked up. - To use the outside area for teaching more things to the Reception children.