



Springfield Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109514
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278211
Inspection dates 12 January 2006 to 13 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Francis LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Orchard Street
School category	Community		MK42 7LJ
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 306000
Number on roll	317	Fax number	01234 306001
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Ann Robertson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Cherry Beale

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 12 January 2006 - 13 January 2006	Inspection number 278211
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average lower school. Most pupils are of white British heritage. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic families, but none are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils moving in and out of the school is average. A lower than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities and attainment on entry is average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school received the Investors in People Award in 2004 and the Healthy School's Award in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The headteacher's evaluation of the school is generally accurate, although, the overall judgements are too generous in their view of some aspects. Whilst standards are improving, pupils do not make enough progress throughout the school. The sound start in the Reception classes is not built on sufficiently well and, by the end of Years 2 and 4, there is substantial underachievement, particularly by the more capable pupils. Very few attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The more recent whole-school focus on writing has led to improvements and standards are now satisfactory. In contrast, mathematics remains an area of significant weakness. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but too much of it is pedestrian. There is not enough good, well-planned teaching to drive up standards. The pupils' personal development and behaviour are satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory, with a number of strong features, particularly in the enrichment activities offered. Leadership and management are inadequate overall. Despite the headteacher's determination to bring about improvement this has been too slow. The middle management of the school is not having sufficient impact on driving forward the pace of change. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to speed up the rate of improvement. The school is developing a more consistent approach to assessment which is now providing secure information to allow pupils' progress to be tracked more accurately. However, this was an issue identified at the last inspection in 1999 and has only recently been put in place. As with marking, assessment information is not used effectively by all teachers to match work more closely to pupils' needs, leading to inconsistencies. The school does, however, demonstrate a sound capacity for further improvement. Given the relatively high costs and the low levels of achievement it does not give satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and aspects of leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, particularly for those who are potentially higher-attaining pupils.
- Provide work that is better matched to pupils' ability and needs and use marking more effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning.
- Monitor teaching and learning more rigorously in order to tackle weaknesses in planning and the inconsistent use of data for tracking pupils' progress.
- Ensure that subject leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve achievement and standards in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage and most attain the levels expected by the end of the Reception Year. However, this is not built on effectively and, by the end of Year 2, while standards are close to those expected nationally, pupils do not make enough progress or achieve all they are capable of, particularly the potentially higher-attaining pupils. There is a similar picture in Year 4. Lessons do not stretch all pupils sufficiently and as a result they perform poorly. With the strong focus on writing over the last year and the clearer targets set, there has been good improvement. However, the same rate of progress has not been seen in reading and mathematics. The pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities achieve in line with the targets in their individual education plans; their progress is sound. National test results at the end of Year 2 show an overall trend of improvement for the last three years. The rise was most marked in 2005 following changes to the organisation of the school, but this was still not sufficient to raise the standards to a high enough level. Whilst pupils achieve most of their targets, many are not being challenged sufficiently. Too few pupils achieved the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils often demonstrate good personal attributes and most enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils comment that 'schools are good places, where you learn lots of different things that help you grow up.' Behaviour is satisfactory and most pupils are caring towards each other and the school. The playground is a busy place, full of sensible activity. Many pupils aspire to becoming 'Playground Friends' or a prefect when they reach Year 4 and play their part in school life. Teachers present good role models of politeness, to which pupils respond well, so relationships are nearly always good. In some lessons, teachers do not use these strengths as well as they could. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils understand the importance of working together socially and appreciate the importance of co-operating with others. They contribute to their classroom rules and bring their developing knowledge of right and wrong to this activity. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy diets, the effects of regular exercise and strategies for keeping themselves safe. Raising money for charity or singing in the choir provide sound contributions to the community. However, low numeracy skills are a barrier to future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's view that teaching is satisfactory is broadly borne out by the inspectors' judgements. However, there is not enough teaching that is of a consistently good

standard and, as a consequence, too many pupils do not achieve their potential. In good lessons, the teaching was lively and learning was well planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils. As a result, they were responsive, keen to learn and worked at a good pace. However, in too many lessons, pace, drive and tasks which fire the pupils' imagination were lacking. In some instances the quality of teaching and learning slipped further because the work was undemanding and pitched at the wrong level, resulting in slow progress. The teaching of pupils who have learning difficulties was not substantially different from the teaching of all other children. All work is marked and often involves pupils. However, it does not provide regular, good quality guidance on what they have done well and why, or what they need to do to improve their work further. Procedures for recording pupils' achievement are secure but only recently put into place, and this information is not used consistently by all teachers. As a result, progress is slowed and standards do not rise quickly enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all requirements and the range of work and activities that pupils undertake is satisfactory. While adequate resources and training have been provided for staff in information and communication technology, not all teachers make sufficient regular use of it to aid pupils' learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in which pupils take part enthusiastically. Good use is made of the expertise of outside individuals. For example, the good daily sports coaching adds significantly to pupils' experiences and helps encourage an active and healthy lifestyle as well as developing good social skills. Pupils are fortunate to enjoy the use of a swimming pool on site, which is used well during the day and in after-school sessions to enhance pupils' skills. Visitors to the school enrich the curriculum well. For example, an Italian student introduces her language in an exciting way which leaves pupils keen to learn more.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are satisfactory. At a personal level staff know their pupils well and develop warm relationships with them. Secure child protection procedures are in place and are understood by all. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously and followed up thoroughly. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and know to whom they should report difficulties or problems. Recently introduced procedures for checking on academic progress are sound overall, although not enough information has yet been generated for them to be fully effective. A sound start has also been made to include pupils in the evaluation of their own work. Systems to identify how best to support pupils who have learning, behavioural or other difficulties are better established and often result in more precise targets to guide progress. The support for these pupils is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate overall. Recent developments, driven by the headteacher's good evaluations and detailed analysis of pupils' achievement, are giving a sharper focus to raising standards for all pupils. However, arriving at this point has taken longer than it should have done. It is only over the last year, with greater insistence by the headteacher, that things have begun to move more quickly and the school has shown the capacity to improve. Teachers with management responsibilities do not yet have a sufficiently clear understanding of their roles or the school's strengths and weaknesses to enable them to help in driving forward the necessary changes. Subject leaders' action plans are detailed but do not set out clear expectations, timescales or measurable targets for improvement. The school takes the views of pupils and parents into account, and other procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the school are in place. However, the monitoring of teaching is not regular enough and does not have the necessary rigour that would further increase the pace of change. There is not a sufficiently strong focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses in learning or teaching so that the best practice in the school can be shared and built on and weaknesses addressed. Governance is inadequate. While governors have a sound committee structure, they do not have effective systems for gathering information for themselves about the school's performance. They do not hold the school to account for the pupils' achievement and standards. They lack secure strategies for evaluating the school's work and their own effectiveness.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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 making us welcome in your school. We enjoyed the opportunities to meet with you and to talk about your work and your interests. However, while many of you are working hard, we consider there are still some improvements that can be made. What we liked about your school: - Your headteacher knows what needs to be done to improve the school further. - The care and support provided for you by all adults makes you feel safe at school. - You have good opportunities to do a wide range of other activities during and after school. - You have made good improvements to your writing skills. What we have asked the school to do now: - Provide harder and more interesting work for those of you who are good at certain subjects. - Make sure your teachers know what you have already done to help them plan better so you learn more quickly as you move through the school. - When teachers mark your work they should tell you what it is that is good about it and what you need to do to be even better. - Make sure your teachers know what is happening in the school in the subjects they look after.