



Caldecote VC Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109596
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278219
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 23 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Geof Timms LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Manor Place
School category	Voluntary controlled		SG18 9DA
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01767316206
Number on roll	68	Fax number	01767 313429
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	.Frank Coleman
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Sue Dury

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 22 November 2005 - 23 November 2005	Inspection number 278219
----------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

© 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 an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Caldecote Voluntary Controlled Lower School serves the village of Upper Caldecote and surrounding area. It is a smaller than average school and this has a significant impact on how the standards achieved can vary from year to year. Most children come from secure social and economic backgrounds. The numbers who are eligible for free school meals are well below average. Almost all children come from White British backgrounds, but a small number comes from ethnic minority backgrounds. One child has English as an additional language but is not at an early stage of acquiring the language. The proportion of children with special educational needs is slightly above average and has risen since the last inspection. The attainment on entry to the school of most children is broadly typical for their ages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Caldecote Voluntary Controlled Lower School is a satisfactory school with a number of good features and a strong Christian ethos. It is an improving school under the current headteacher and senior management. The inspection supports this picture which emerges from the school's accurate self-evaluation. The school currently offers satisfactory value for money but has a good capacity to improve in the future. This judgement is based on the improvements already made over the past year, particularly in the improved levels of achievement. The Foundation Stage (Reception) provision is of good quality and children make good progress during their first year at the school. This good progress is helped by the effective use of the early assessments of children's knowledge and understanding to identify and track their individual strengths and weaknesses. The children's personal development is very strong and there is an excellent focus on healthy eating, typified by the efforts made by the school's excellent cook and the high quality meals she prepares. The children are well-behaved and actively interested in their lessons. They are safe and well looked after at school. The midday supervisors have worked very hard to provide a very good range of activities for children during lunchtimes, many of which are adult led. However, standards remain at a satisfactory level overall. There are weaknesses in writing, particularly at the end of Year 2, and in mathematics at the end of Year 4. The subject leaders have not developed their role sufficiently since the last inspection. The development of the use of assessment in tracking progress and addressing underachievement is at an early stage and needs to be further developed, especially for the more able children. The marking of children's work, especially in Years 3 and 4, does not always make clear how they can improve. The school has identified causes of weaknesses and is taking appropriate action to remedy them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by the end of Year 4 and in writing throughout the school.
- Continue the planned programme to improve the ability of the subject leaders' to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Improve marking of children's work, especially in Years 3 and 4, and ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of the children starting in the Reception class have attainment that is similar to that typically found nationally. They have good social skills and their personal development is very good. They produce some very good art work. The current group of children have weaker calculation and writing skills as shown by early assessments made soon after they started school. This recently introduced practice enables staff to track children's progress more closely through the Reception year and as they move up through the school. Children make satisfactory progress throughout the school and

their standards by the end of Year 4 in 2005 were above average in reading, average in writing but well below average in mathematics. These results were achieved with a class in which half of the children had special educational needs. These results represent an improvement over the results in 2004. The current standards in Years 3 and 4 in mathematics are higher than those in 2005. In 2005, Year 2 children had standards in reading and mathematics that were broadly average and they met the targets set for them. Standards in writing were below average as too few children attained the higher levels. This has been the case over recent years and the current standards are still not high enough. The majority of the children with learning or physical difficulties make similar progress to their peers due to the good support they receive. The setting of appropriately challenging individual targets is good in English. The children's skills in using computers are satisfactory, but they need more opportunities to use computers across a range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's provision for children's personal development and well-being is good. Children tell how much they enjoy school and this is supported by their parents' views. They are enthusiastic and interested in lessons. This was particularly reflected in the attitudes and interest shown by Years 3 and 4 during a Second World War theme day. Attendance is usually above average and punctuality is good. Behaviour in all classes is often very good and children concentrate well and work hard. They understand what is expected of them and show respect and consideration for others. Children feel safe in school and they value the recently introduced systems for rewarding their hard work and good behaviour. Children work and play well together. This is also the case at lunchtimes when midday supervisors have worked hard to provide and run a range of activities that use children's time more purposefully and actively. When given the opportunity children show good levels of responsibility and initiative. The school provides well for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through their regular participation in sports and their enthusiasm for healthy eating is outstanding. This is supported by the very effective work of the school cook who reinforces such learning through encouraging good choices and sourcing local fresh food. Children are well prepared for their future economic well-being through activities such as selling vegetables they have grown at school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but improving and with some important strengths. Teachers and other staff have very good relationships with the children, and this encourages the very good attitudes towards learning and behaviour. Lessons are well-managed and resources used effectively and appropriately.

Teachers are beginning to use more detailed assessment information when planning lessons and teaching them but this is at an early stage. The best teaching is characterised by challenging activities that extend and consolidate children's knowledge and understanding. For example, in one mathematics session, very good questioning was used to develop children's ability and confidence in working with fractions. Opportunities for children to work together were used effectively to promote learning. In another lesson children were encouraged to explain how they had arrived at an answer and this helped the teacher assess the depth of their learning. Where the teaching needs to improve, the marking of children's work does not always make clear what they have done well or how they can improve. The setting of individual targets for children in English is effective and could usefully be extended. Although children are often offered extra help when they find work difficult, at times work is too easy for the higher attainers. The school is working hard to raise teachers' expectations of what children can achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities to help children to learn. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is mostly well matched to children's needs. In the Reception class, children settle quickly and make good progress because teaching is centred around objectives based on guidance for the Foundation Stage. During lessons there is a good balance between teacher-led tasks and those selected by the children themselves. The school organises a good range of after-school activities which children value and attend regularly. In addition, a small number of more able children have opportunities to attend a local summer school to develop and extend their skills and interests. In addition, the provision for pupils with learning or physical difficulties is good and these children make progress in line with their peers. Visits and visitors into school extend children's experiences well and make a good contribution to their personal development as well as their learning about the wider world. Children have satisfactory opportunities to learn to play the violin and brass instruments. Provision in information and communication technology is good, with a good-sized computer suite and newly fitted interactive whiteboards in Years 1 to 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care and support for children are good. The staff work hard to ensure that children learn in a happy and secure environment. Children feel safe in school and good attention is paid to the monitoring of all issues of health and safety. This has resulted in specific improvements such as, for example, the recent fencing of the school. Children have trust in their teachers and support assistants and they know where to turn to for help. Arrangements for child protection are fully in place. Children who need extra help receive good support in classrooms, and this helps them to make good progress against their personal targets. The good partnership with parents and outside agencies ensures that their needs are well met. The assessment of children's

academic progress has improved, but better use needs to be made of this information to help teachers to provide sufficiently challenging work for all children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory overall, though within that there are several strong aspects. The headteacher offers good leadership and has a clear vision of how she wants the school to improve. This is based on accurate self-evaluation, making good use of the views of parents and pupils. There is a good development plan, covering a three year period, with more detailed action plans for immediate priorities. There have been a number of important improvements recently, such as better communication with parents. This shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further. The role of subject leaders is underdeveloped and has remained so since the last inspection. The current headteacher is working hard to improve this but this has yet to have much impact on standards, although there has been a halt to the previous decline in standards. Subject leaders need to be more involved in monitoring the work in their subjects, in spreading good practice and in analysing strengths and weaknesses so that provision can be improved. The good leadership is also reflected in the positive personal development and the good care and guidance offered to children. The governing body have an effective working structure and a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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?	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	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 welcoming me to your school when I visited recently. It was a pleasure to talk with you all and to watch you working and playing. I really enjoyed my time in the school. I particularly enjoyed talking to some of you about the things you like doing at school. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things I saw. You are very lucky at your school because Miss Dury, the teachers and other adults all look after and care for you well. They encourage you to be healthy and to stay safe. They are working very hard to ensure you have good opportunities to learn new things and to make the school even better in the future. You are particularly lucky to have such good school dinners cooked with such good, fresh food. Well done, Mrs Haines! You behave very well most of the time and this helps the teachers to help you learn. Miss Dury and the teachers are keen to make the school even better for you. I think that to do this they need to help you get better at writing and mathematics. You are very good readers already. The teachers in charge of subjects need to spend more time finding out how well you are learning. Teachers should provide you with more help when they are marking your work, and also make sure the work they do give you is hard enough. It was good to find out that so many of you were happy at school, and that your parents said you were happy there as well. Keep working hard and enjoy your time at Caldecote.