



Ursula Taylor VC Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109597
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278220
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector . Linda Killman LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		MK41 6EG
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 359128
Number on roll	218	Fax number	01234 326251
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Nigel Sparrow
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Majorie Carline

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	Inspection number 278220
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Ursula Taylor is an average sized voluntary controlled school. The social and economic circumstances of most pupils' families are average for England and the pupil population is stable. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. Few pupils have English as an additional language. The school is arranged in seven classes and following their reception year, the pupils are taught in mixed age classes. The present headteacher has been in post for eleven years. Most members of the governing body are new since September 2005 when the governing body was reconstituted.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness that matches that of the inspectors. It provides a good education for its pupils and gives good value for money. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction and is dedicated to school improvement. There is a strong sense of commitment amongst governors and staff to enable every pupil to do their best through high quality of care, good teaching and a broad range of learning experiences. However, there is more to do to ensure the monitoring of teaching is effective and to determine how well the pupils are learning. Good progress has been made on issues raised in the school's previous inspection and the leadership and management are well placed to secure further improvements. Effective teaching, high standards of care and good quality resources in the Foundation Stage get children off to a flying start at school so that they achieve the goals expected of them. Children enjoy learning in a safe, stimulating environment and they make good progress from a low starting point. In the rest of the school standards are good and pupils achieve well but the performance of the more able pupils should be improved. There is good teaching in all year groups but to improve it even more, the teachers need to fine tune their planning to better reflect how much the pupils are achieving. The pupils' behaviour is good and many show obvious enjoyment in lessons and at play. They benefit from the broad range of extra activities on offer outside the regular school day. Parents speak very highly of the school and what it provides for their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring of teaching by measuring how well the pupils are learning.
- Increase the progress made by more able pupils by providing them with more demanding work.
- Improve the quality of assessment and its use in planning the next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children enter the school, their skills are slightly below those expected for four-year-olds, particularly in language and literacy and mathematics. By the end of the reception year children are achieving well and reaching the goals expected of their age. As the pupils move through Years 1 and 2, they continue to make good progress. In Year 2, more children consistently achieve the expected level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics than in most schools nationally. An average number of pupils achieve the higher level 3. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above expectations for this age group. For example, they use word-processing skills confidently to edit and improve written work. The school has begun to set targets for the pupils in Years 3 and 4 and regularly checks to see that they will reach them. Standards in Key Stage 2 are just above average and analysis of school data shows that they make good progress. However, the school recognises that it can do more to

accelerate the learning of the highest achievers. Learners with special educational needs and those for whom English is a new language also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and are proud to belong to it. The children say that it is a kind school, and that the adults are always ready to help them. Parents share this view. The calm and orderly atmosphere helps children to feel safe and secure. They know the rules, and understand the reasons for them. They behave very well and this helps them to learn. Pupils enjoy learning and are eager to get on with their work. They concentrate and usually work hard. Attendance is satisfactory. The school provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils develop moral values and learn to apply these to their own actions. For example, they know the importance of honesty and of saying sorry when in the wrong. The pupils know that bullying is unacceptable, and that any such problems will be quickly resolved. The children learn to share and to show respect for other people, welcoming newcomers and going out of their way to be friendly. They readily take responsibility and this leads to very good social skills. The 'Playground Friends' demonstrate concern for others and help to ensure that playtime is enjoyable for everyone. This group, and the School Council, serve to build the skills required for good citizenship. The school places a high priority on helping pupils to be safe and healthy. They understand the principles of healthy eating, take regular exercise and they are keen to help in looking after the environment. The pupils develop good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT that equip them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because of the good teaching they receive throughout the school. Teachers plan well together to make sure that they cover the necessary work. They are less confident in adjusting their teaching in the light of how much pupils achieve in lessons. When children are taught in mixed age groups the planning is not always effective in building their understanding step by step. Sights are not always set high enough for the most able pupils, exploring how far they can go. Basic skills are taught thoroughly in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is building in more investigative work in science, to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers are confident in using computers and technology as a tool for teaching and learning to help the pupils to extend their skills and enjoy their work. Learning support assistants and other adults work well with groups and individuals who need extra help ensuring pupils progress as far as they can. However, when the teacher is working directly with the whole class, the assistants are not involved enough in purposeful activities. Teachers mark pupils work carefully and assess the progress they are making. They set targets for pupils in

literacy, and this is beginning to help pupils understand how to improve. They manage classes well, creating a good atmosphere for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. There is a suitable emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Interesting topics build learning across subjects and often give pupils the chance to work practically and creatively. The school's good resources for ICT enable pupils to have frequent access to computers to develop their skills. Pupils benefit from regular exercise in physical education. Music also features strongly, and the children sing with spirit and enthusiasm. Personal, social and health education is provided very effectively. A teacher from the local middle school teaches French to Years 3 and 4 once a week giving the pupils a good start in learning a foreign language. The school adapts the curriculum well for pupils who are at an early stage in learning English, or who have special educational needs. There are many extra activities such as football and choral-speaking which enrich the curriculum, and these are very popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a high quality of care, guidance and support, which is strongly praised by parents. The staff know the children and their families very well and are quick to recognise and respond when children are unhappy. Special needs are identified early and action is quickly taken to provide extra help. Child protection procedures are fully in place. The teachers and all members of the support staff work as a harmonious team to provide effective pastoral care. Children are supervised well at playtimes, and encouraged to play constructively. A 'nurture group' is helping to build the confidence of children through small group activities and a buddy group is being developed to help some children make friends and develop social skills. Children understand the school's routines and its expectations of them and they flourish as a result. The setting of targets is being developed to give children more specific goals to work towards, and to give them, and their parents, a better understanding of the progress being made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction in raising standards and promoting the well-being of learners. Her judgements about the school's work are largely accurate. Governors share the headteacher's commitment and are effectively involved in all aspects of school development. The school improvement plan is used to drive improvement forward and all stakeholders contribute to it. The headteacher uses analysis of the school's assessment data to quantify the progress that pupils make, to make judgements about standards and to plan activities to tackle areas of weakness. Teaching and

learning are regularly monitored and the school's written evidence shows improving quality in the judgements and in the feedback given to staff. This provides helpful guidance to staff but often teachers are not revisited to measure the difference this makes to the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders are competent in looking after their subjects and their role is developing. The school is aware that they are not always confident in using information from assessment and monitoring to improve teaching and learning and is providing further staff development. The school is well resourced and the quality of accommodation is good.

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?	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	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	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?	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	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 welcoming the inspectors to your school. We enjoyed spending time with you and watching you at work and at play. We were very impressed with your politeness and how open and friendly you were when you talked to us. You told us so much about your school that helped us to get to know it well in a short time. We found out that you really enjoy coming to school. You think that it is a kind school and you trust your teachers and other adults to help you if you are having problems. The school cares for you and encourages you to be healthy and to be safe. You know the rules and understand the reasons for them. You behave very well and we were particularly pleased to see how sensibly you move around the building. You take part in a wide range of enjoyable activities during and after the school day. Mrs Carline and all of the other adults in the school work very hard to make sure that you do your best and learn as much as you can. They work as a team and are interested in finding ways to help you to learn even more. We know that many of you are very capable learners and your teachers will be thinking about ways to give you challenging activities to see how far you can go. Your teachers will be expecting a lot from you in the months and years ahead. You enjoy learning because your teachers teach you well and want the best for you. We are confident that you will all improve even further in the future and we wish you every success.