



Silsoe CofE VC Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109605
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278223
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 1 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Susan Hall 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		MK45 4ES
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525 860247
Number on roll	129	Fax number	01525 862941
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev.Stephen Holroyd
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Susan Purdue

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small first school serving a rural area of Bedfordshire that is above average in terms of social and economic features. The large majority of pupils are White British. None of the small number of pupils of different heritage is identified as being at the early stages of acquiring English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. The movement of pupils to and from other schools is below average. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities than in most schools. During this academic year a special needs nurture unit was set up at the school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and has the capacity to improve further. The inspection findings support the school's assessment of its effectiveness in virtually all key areas. Parents are generally very pleased with the quality of education and care offered. The school is a fully inclusive and welcoming community. Staff have worked successfully to establish a nurture unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties, which is enabling them to be included in several school activities. Standards are above average when pupils enter the school, especially in their levels of confidence, their speaking and their early mathematical skills. Pupils make good progress across the school. By the age of seven, and when they leave the school at nine, standards are above average. The quality of teaching is predominantly good and is most effective in the Foundation Stage and with the nurture group. All pupils benefit from the many high quality support staff. However, teachers sometimes limit pupils' involvement in their own learning and miss opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with classmates. The curriculum is satisfactory, although staff do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply the skills they have in problem-solving and investigative activities. Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides a well-considered and effective steer to school improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better opportunities for pupils to be involved in discussions in order to test out their ideas. - Ensure there are more open-ended activities that requires pupils to use and apply their problem solving skills, especially in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Pupils start school with knowledge and skills which are above average overall. They are generally confident and articulate, settle quickly, and do well in all areas of their early learning. With small numbers in each year group standards in national tests can vary year on year. The school sets challenging targets for pupils, which are usually met. The inspection confirms that standards in Year 2 and when they leave the school in Year 4 are well above national expectations. National assessment results in Year 2 show that standards have often been exceedingly high and an above average proportion of pupils usually achieve at the higher levels. While girls did considerably better than boys last year, this has varied from year to year. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties also achieve well. Generally standards are slightly better in reading and writing than in mathematics. This is mainly because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills. This also applies in science, and information and communication technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is good and, through a recent focus on 'values', pupils are becoming more aware of the needs of others. Almost all have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils and parents rightly believe that there is little bullying and that, when minor incidents occur, these are handled well. Pupils are encouraged to adopt safe practices and are confident that there are people they can turn to for help. Pupils are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. Attendance is broadly average. The school takes good account of pupils' views and helps them develop their roles in the school and local community. The effective manner in which the school includes and supports all is illustrated when pupils with learning difficulties are chosen by their classmates to take on roles and responsibilities within the school. There is satisfactory provision to develop healthy lifestyles, although some pupils indicate that they would like more water fountains and better school lunches.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is effective in the Foundation Stage where good use is made of the new facilities. There are also useful links with the adjoining pre-school group, which enable a smooth transition to school. In the Reception classes, activities are well planned and provide good levels of challenge across the full range of tasks, including the use of the outdoor area. Teaching of pupils in the nurture group is good and is particularly effective in raising the self-esteem of these pupils. Across the school staff have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Pupils are keen to live up to these. Staff explain things well and there is a high level of adult support for all. However, in some lessons, where teaching is less effective, staff miss opportunities for pupils to be fully involved in their own learning. For instance, there are few opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and discuss what they have found out with their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, which is below the school's self evaluation. Reception pupils get off to a good start, learning through a well-planned variety of practical learning experiences. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is well supported by recent work on developing a 'values' approach. Activities to enrich the curriculum, including French and a residential visit in Year 4, are enthusiastically supported and there is a good range of extra-curricular clubs. Activities for pupils in the nurture group are securely based on their learning needs. However, across the school, staff do not always make the most of opportunities for pupils to be

involved in their own learning. This is seen especially in mathematics where there is too much reliance on commercially produced materials which limit opportunities for pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, to think for themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good, which is above the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness in this area. Staff know pupils and their needs well and work hard to help them in all areas of their learning. The high priority placed on pupils' well-being is shown in the way the school plans activities based on a project recognising the development of 'values'. Good procedures are in place for child protection which ensures their safety. Pupils are confident that there is always someone to turn to if they have any worries. There are strong links with support agencies, which especially benefit pupils in the school's nurture unit. This, together with the quality of care provided, enables these emotionally vulnerable pupils to take an active part in many school activities. Teachers set demanding but achievable targets for pupils. The way in which pupils are helped to develop basic skills, provides a good preparation for their future education and life beyond school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The school is effective in working out what it does well and what it needs to do to improve further. Since her appointment 18 months ago the headteacher has worked well with staff to maintain high standards and to pursue areas for further improvement. The views of almost all parents are very positive and they believe they have suitable opportunities to comment on the work of the school. With senior staff the head has created an ethos where all are fully involved in planning for improvement. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and there have been improvements in facilities and links with the adjoining pre-school. Leadership of the nurture unit is also good and has been a major factor in its early success. Whilst there are occasions for subject leaders to monitor the quality of teaching, staff recognise the need to provide further opportunities to look at pupils' work and to identify what could be improve it further. Governance of the school is generally good and governors have been influential in the development of the provision for the nurture group.

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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	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	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	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

Following my visit I would like to let you know what I found out about your school. But first can I say a big 'thank you' for making me feel welcome and for talking to me about the different things that you do at school. It was good to hear how you feel that your teachers listen to you and take good care of you. You probably saw quite a lot of me when I came into classrooms, met the School Council, in assembly and when I had lunch with you. I have told the staff that you behaved well and they are proud of you. I know that you like school and so I have talked with your headteacher and staff about how they can think about ways of being even better. They are going to look at how you can be more involved in lessons and give you more opportunities to discuss your ideas with your classmates. They are also going to plan more ways for you to develop skills in solving problems and carry out investigations especially in maths. Your headteacher has got some really good ideas to make the school an even better place. You can all play an important part in this by working as hard as you can and being kind and caring for everyone. To help you to do your best you need to make sure you come to school regularly, and to give you the best chance to do well, please encourage your parents to take holidays out of term time. All my best wishes. It was a pleasure to meet you all.