



# St James' CofE VA Lower School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109614  
**LEA** BEDFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278225  
**Inspection dates** 22 September 2005 to 23 September 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Andrew Matthews LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Main Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		MK40 4BD
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 10		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01234352721
<b>Number on roll</b>	95	<b>Fax number</b>	01234 273664
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.Ken Brotherston
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Karen Luscombe

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 10	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 September 2005 - 23 September 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278225
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average first school, situated in a socially advantaged village on the outskirts of Bedford. The school is over-subscribed. The majority of pupils are of white British descent, but a third come from other backgrounds, including Asian and Caribbean. No pupils have English as an additional language and a below average number of pupils have learning difficulties, mostly to do with learning or behavioural difficulties. Two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school has recently been awarded Healthy Eating status. Children's attainment on entry to reception is average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and overall it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. In many of the years the quality of education is very good, enabling pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve very well both academically and personally. However, pupils' achievement falls significantly in Year 4, where the quality of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Overall, parents are happy with the school's provision but there are concerns about the behaviour and progress of the older pupils. Children in Reception settle well and make very good progress because of the well-planned provision and care they experience. Pupils also achieve very well in Years 1 and 2 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and achieve well overall. The quality of teaching is generally good but, because of weaknesses in Year 4, the overall judgement is satisfactory, and this reflects the overall progress pupils make through the school. The tracking of pupils' progress, however, is not regular enough to ensure they reach their targets. The atmosphere in school is positive and all staff make pupils feel valued. The views of staff are sought and, increasingly, the views of parents. All sides feel that their opinions are listened to and acted on. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to play a greater part in the life of the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although the headteacher's and governors' leadership skills are good. The headteacher is taking all steps possible to eradicate the ineffective teaching and underachievement in Year 4. The school works effectively with other local schools and the church. The school is in a good position to continue the good improvements it has made since the last inspection. Given the high levels of achievement in most parts of the school, and the lower than average budget, overall the school provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Focus on: - Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Year 4. - Tracking pupils' progress more regularly towards their end of year targets. - Creating more opportunities for pupils to play a part in the life of the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Reception children make very good progress, particularly in their language and personal and social work, and a great many exceed the national expectations before they move into Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties make overall good progress towards their individual targets because of the caring and knowledgeable support they receive. Year 2 pupils historically reach exceptionally high standards in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics because of the high quality provision in reception and Years 1 and 2. However, the results of assessments for pupils in Years 3 and 4 in 2005 show that too few of these pupils reached their challenging targets. This results in a very noticeable fall in achievement and reduces the overall progress of the oldest pupils to

satisfactory from when they started school. The fall in standards has led the school to appoint a new teacher so that numeracy and literacy are taught in separate year groups each morning. Inspection indications are that pupils in Year 3 are now building well on their Year 2 work but that Year 4 pupils are still not making enough progress in these lessons.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school rightly feels that the personal development of its pupils is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are fully aware of procedures to follow in the rare event of a dispute. Pupils are polite, open and honest and greatly enjoy coming to school. Pupils are looked after well and are made well aware of healthy options through diet and exercise. The school's commitment to fitness and healthy lifestyles through, for example, the governor initiative of encouraging more pupils to walk and cycle to school, is clear evidence of improving life opportunities for the pupils. Personal development is enriched by the wide cultural mix of the school, clearly evident when both Muslim and Hindu pupils took leading parts in the Christian celebration of Harvest Festival at the local church. The close links with this church make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development. The strong focus on basic skills provides pupils with a good grounding for adult life. Pupils' self-confidence grows noticeably as they move through the school and Year 4 pupils have a good level of maturity and confidence. More could be done to encourage them to play a greater role in the life of the school, such as through a school council, which would also give opportunities to develop their economic awareness.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Despite the strong teaching in most of the school, weaknesses in Year 4 result in the quality of teaching being overall satisfactory. There are examples of good and very good practice, leading to pupils moving from average standards on entry to the school, to exceptionally high standards by the end of Year 2. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning and discussion well to make pupils think and ask pupils to reconsider their answers to improve their quality, clearly evident in a Year 2 lesson on phonics. Teachers set targets that help pupils to understand the standards that are expected and, in marking and discussion, ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve. However, this is not the case in Year 4, where too many pupils are unaware of their standards and the teacher's marking does not consistently identify what individual pupils need to do to improve their work. Teachers have a good range of behaviour management strategies and are well supported by the knowledgeable classroom teaching assistants. Teachers' planning is generally well matched to the

needs of the different abilities of pupils, with higher-achieving pupils generally being very well challenged.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is effectively planned in relation to national requirements and allocated time for individual subjects ensures that pupils have a good balance to their learning. Activities are generally well planned to respond to the needs of the different ages and abilities. However, in Year 4, the planning does not take sufficient account of different abilities and is resulting in some significant underachievement. Pupils' understanding of following a safe and healthy lifestyle is made through carefully planned work in science, personal, social and health education, physical education and design and technology. The school's commitment to healthy eating and its successful bid for a school travel plan should ensure the continued development of pupils' understanding of these two important areas. Studies with a strong international focus, such as the Global Learning link with a school in America have strengthened pupils' cultural understanding significantly. Well-planned visits and visitors and a small range of popular clubs and sporting activities, add to pupils' academic and personal achievement and increase their enjoyment of learning. Older pupils feel that there would be good support for an increase in the number and range of clubs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The care, guidance and support for and the needs of the great majority of learners are met effectively. Challenging and achievable targets are understood by the great majority of pupils, although some Year 4 pupils are uncertain of their numeracy and literacy targets. Half-yearly meetings between teachers and the headteacher are used to review the progress of pupils towards their end of year targets. This number of meetings is sufficient for classes where the quality of teaching is good but not sufficient for the pupils in Years 3 and 4 who need more regular monitoring of their progress towards their end of year targets. The great majority of pupils are given the skills to become effective learners and there is a good partnership between home and school that supports pupils' learning. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are good as are child protection procedures. Pupils are confident about whom to go to when having difficulties. The school recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities to contribute to the development of the school. It rightly has plans to set up a school council to encourage greater responsibility and independence for pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and rightly judges its leadership and management as satisfactory. However, there are some significant strengths in the work of governors and of the headteacher that put the school in a good position to

continue its improvements. This is a safe school that works hard to meet the needs of all its pupils, providing a focus on learning that enables the great majority of pupils to thrive. The headteacher, who has been in the post for one year, knows the school very well and is putting into place successful initiatives to improve further the school's quality of teaching, particularly for the older pupils in Year 4. All that is possible is being done to tackle their underachievement. She is very well supported by a strong and skilful governing body. She has built up strong relationships with parents and staff, following a turbulent period prior to her arrival. Processes for setting targets to lift standards are robust and the school has high expectations for the achievement of all its pupils. The school has good links with local schools and outside support agencies to ensure pupils are given equal opportunities and are well supported. Resources are carefully managed and monitored for the benefit of pupils, providing good value for money. The work of governors has improved well since the last inspection. They fulfil all statutory duties and provide a good critical challenge to the school's leadership. They are strongly determined to build on the school's strengths and robustly address the known weaknesses. Their work has also made a noticeable contribution other recent developments, particularly in school buildings.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	3	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Pupils Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when I came to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking with you and watching you working with your teachers. It was good to speak with your teachers about how well you work at school. I also enjoyed your singing and reading at the harvest service. I think that your school does many things well, but there are a few things it needs to do better. What I liked most about your school - You work hard and most of you do really well. - Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and your teachers. - Your headteacher is doing a good job. She knows how to make the school better for you. - Your governors work hard to help your headteacher and your other teachers. - Those of you who find work hard are getting the right sort of help and you use it well. What I have asked your school to do now - Give better support for your learning in Year 4. - Keep a more regular check on how well you do throughout the year. - Look for more ways of involving you in the life of your school.