



Ashton St Peter VA CofE School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109703
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278250
Inspection dates 10 October 2005 to 10 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. EILEEN CHADWICK LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Street
School category	Voluntary aided		LU5 4RP
Age range of pupils	4 to 10		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582663410
Number on roll	154	Fax number	01582477460
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.C Coudert
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Malcolm Curtis

Age group 4 to 10	Inspection dates 10 October 2005 - 10 October 2005	Inspection number 278250
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This Church of England primary school serves the town of Dunstable and surrounding area. The school is smaller than most other primary schools, with 154 pupils. Many pupils are white British and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is similar to that of most schools. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, although most pupils do not live in advantaged areas. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, at 12 per cent. The overall attainment on entry to Reception is average, although there is a wide spread of attainment. The overall mobility of pupils is now low but was high in recent years. For example, one third of 2004/5 Year 4 pupils began at the school between Years 2 to 4. There have been several changes since the previous inspection. The school has expanded as then it had 127 pupils. The headteacher does not now have a class responsibility as he did then. In the last year the school experienced some staffing instability, although it has recently become more stable. The school is moving to a new site at the end of this academic year and the headteacher is due to retire about the same time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspectors judge the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory, which is how the school judges itself. However, the school evaluates the quality of its provision to be good, including teaching and learning, whereas inspectors evaluate this to be satisfactory. The main reason is that the quality of teaching is variable for pupils of different ages. Whilst it is good in Years 1 and 2, it is satisfactory in Reception and Years 3 and 4. This affects the consistency of pupils' progress. Overall, parents and pupils have positive views of the school. The strong focus on improving the teaching of reading has raised standards from Reception to Year 4. The school has been effective in raising standards for Year 2 pupils after a large dip in 2003. By Year 2, standards are now above average in reading and mathematics and very high in writing. Pupils make a good start in Reception in acquiring basic literacy skills and a satisfactory start in other aspects of their learning, including mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 4 are average overall. Compared with their earlier average attainment at the end of Year 2, their progress is satisfactory. By Year 4, reading standards are good and better than for mathematics, where there is some underachievement among more capable pupils. Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, is satisfactory. A significant weakness is that pupils do not have enough understanding of the wide range of cultures in Britain today because provision is inadequate. The headteacher and senior teachers have been effective in managing the changes needed to improve reading and information and communication technology (ICT). They have identified the need to raise the standards in mathematics so they are as consistently as good as reading. However, there are weaknesses in checking the progress pupils make, including those in Reception, and this prevents leaders acting quickly to address any underachievement. However, most of the key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. In view of this, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Produce more effective systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' attainment in order to improve their progress.
- Raise standards in mathematics, especially in problem-solving for higher attaining pupils.
- Implement a system for measuring children's attainment on entry which thoroughly covers the areas of learning for the Foundation Stage.
- Improve multi-cultural education so pupils' understanding improves.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 4 pupils reach average standards overall in English, mathematics, science and ICT. This represents satisfactory achievement compared with the average standards pupils reached at the end of their Year 2 and on entry to the school. Standards in reading in Year 4 are above average and better than pupils' attainment

at the end of Year 2. Pupils' good progress in reading stems from the school's improved approach to teaching this subject. Progress in writing is satisfactory. However, progress in mathematics is less even. Whilst progress is good for lower attaining pupils by Year 4, there are some weaknesses for more capable pupils. A smaller proportion of pupils reach higher levels than did so in Year 2. Mathematical problem-solving is a weaker area, especially for higher attaining pupils. The school is not keeping a close enough eye on pupils' progress through Years 3 and 4 so it can quickly address any gaps in pupils' understanding. The school ensures that the pupils leave the school with a satisfactory level of basic skills. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards have started to improve again in Year 2 after a significant dip in 2003. By Year 2, standards are above average in reading and mathematics and standards are exceptional in writing. Pupils make very good progress in learning to write. Writing is consistently well taught from Reception to Year 2 and progress is rapid in Years 1 and 2. By Year 2, pupils are very confident writers, spell words correctly and their writing is well formed and neat. Standards in science are above average after pupils have made good progress. These pupils are well prepared for entry to Year 3. Children in Reception reach above average standards in reading and writing and make good progress. Children attain average standards in speaking, listening and thinking, mathematics and all other areas of their learning after making satisfactory progress. Standards are better in literacy than in other areas, including mathematics, because literacy assessment is thorough from the children's earliest days in school. However, assessment of children's attainment on entry in other areas has weaknesses, so work is not always well matched to children's capabilities. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because of effective identification systems and the support they receive. No significant differences were seen between the attainment of boys and girls except in Year 4, where most of the pupils on the special educational needs register are boys. These boys reached lower standards than girls when they were in Year 2 and are now receiving extra support to help them catch up. The few pupils with English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. The school sets modest targets, which have been exceeded in the last two years except in mathematics in 2005 for Year 4 pupils, where there was a small shortfall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are positive about school, settle well to their lessons and generally enjoy their learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils feel safe and there are very few reported incidents of bullying. A small number of pupils take an active role in the life of school through the school council but there are fewer opportunities for the younger pupils. Relationships are good and pupils are secure in knowing where to seek advice if they need help. Those pupils who are school councillors help to promote other pupils' well being through their role as 'blue caps' when they try to resolve any minor problems between pupils. Pupils regularly take part in physical exercise and the good variety of lunchtime games and activities contribute well to this. This also helps them to play together well in the playground. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. The whole

school has been actively involved in raising money for a range of charities through which pupils have developed their enterprise skills. Pupils develop their awareness of traditional British culture, especially through connections within the local community. There are inadequate opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the wide range of cultures in Britain today.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with examples of good teaching seen, particularly in Year 2. In good lessons, work is well matched to the needs of pupils of all abilities and teachers skilfully ask questions that probe pupils' thinking and understanding. Good support is being given to teachers who are new to the school. Effective training for all staff in improving the teaching of reading has led to the higher standards throughout the school. Teachers' planning shows a satisfactory match of work to the range of pupils' abilities. Work for pupils with special educational needs is well matched to their prior attainment and teaching assistants work well alongside teachers to give these pupils good support. This helps them learn well and to catch up. Teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily. There are good examples of pupils being involved in assessing their own progress. For example, pupils in Year 2 evaluated how well they had learned compared with their teacher's targets for that lesson. There is also evidence that teachers modify future lesson plans as a result of pupils' earlier learning. Whole-school systems for recording pupils' progress are inadequate. Although progress in individual subjects is recorded and checked by individual teachers, the system for recording and checking pupils' progress from year to year is ineffective. The way the school records pupils' attainment does not help teachers to readily judge progress against their earlier standards and achievement. This prevents early improvements to provision. There are insufficient checks of the rates of progress of boys and girls and minority ethnic pupils. As a result the school does not know how well particular groups of pupils are doing compared with their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for the pupils. In Reception, relevant practical activities underpin children's learning. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced. It is heavily weighted to literacy and numeracy, with just enough time for other subjects. There are not always enough planned opportunities for more capable pupils to learn at higher levels, in investigation and problem solving, especially in mathematics. Extra-curricular activities are adequate. Many pupils enjoy the thriving school choir. The sports clubs are well supported and help pupils to stay fit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is satisfactory overall. Arrangements for pupils' safety and welfare are secure. Child protection procedures are in place and staff know how to raise concerns. Up-to-date training is currently being undertaken for all staff. Pupils are confident about approaching adults if they have any concerns. The school actively promotes the personal development and well-being of pupils. The weaknesses in the school's systems for checking pupils' progress lead to uneven progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior teachers have identified the main priorities for improving pupils' achievement. There is a good sense of working together of all staff for the benefit of the pupils. Subject managers' roles are satisfactory and the literacy manager is having a good impact on raising English standards. Improving literacy has rightly been a priority. The headteacher has ensured there have been good systems for ensuring that standards improve throughout the school. The school has successfully integrated the significant increase in numbers of pupils over the past few years. Parents are consulted and their views are taken into account, although a minority would like this to happen more regularly. The headteacher's monitoring and support for improving teaching and learning is satisfactory. There has been an improvement in this since the previous inspection. However, the systems for recording assessments of pupils' progress and attainment, including attainment on entry in Reception, are limiting the rate of school improvement. The current arrangements do not help management or teachers to easily compare pupils' progress from their earlier attainment. This weakens the school's processes of self-evaluation and school improvement. As a result there is sometimes a slippage in standards, for example for higher attaining pupils in mathematics. The headteacher and senior staff do not check the progress children in Reception are making by analysing assessments regularly enough. Governors are closely involved with the school and are keen for the school to do well. They are linked to subjects and between them have a good range of expertise. They have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but are inclined to listen to the school's view of its own performance rather than seeking out other information. Overall, the school is now moving forward again after the dip in standards in 2003. The school has satisfactorily addressed its key issues from its previous inspection. As a result the inspection team judges that the school has the capacity to improve.

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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?	3	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?	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	2	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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	3	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?	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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 your help when we visited your school in October. We enjoyed our visit and seeing you at work and at play. We found you all to be friendly and polite. We thought these things were good about your school: - You are helpful to each other and your teachers. - You know how to behave properly. - You try hard and this helps you to learn. - You take care with your work and your work is often neat. - You are learning to read and write well. - Many of you enjoy your school choir. - You arrive on time and attend regularly. - You are very polite to visitors. We have suggested several things that would help your school do better; - We have asked the school to help you to become better at solving problems in mathematics. - We have asked the school to check more often how well you are learning. - We have asked the school to help you understand how delightfully different people are in this country and all over the world and how we sometimes do things in different ways. We hope you continue to enjoy your school.