



Lavendon School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110242
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 278388
Inspection dates 6 July 2006 to 7 July 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Marfleet AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Community		Lavendon
Age range of pupils	4 to 12		Olney MK46 4HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 712680
Number on roll	97	Fax number	01234 714563
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Graham Mabbutt
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2004	Headteacher	Mrs A Tobia

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The four classes in this village school each currently cover two year groups, although the pattern will change in September 2006 when the school ceases to teach Year 7 pupils. Apart from two pupils of Indian heritage, all are White British, and all have English as their first language. Very few are entitled to free school meals. An average number have learning difficulties or disabilities. The interim headteacher, put in place after the 2004 inspection, is about to move to another post and her successor has been appointed.

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 modestly judges itself to be satisfactory but it is in fact a good school. It provides good value for money. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection, when serious weaknesses were found, particularly in leadership and management. Improvements have led to better provision and higher standards.

Children join the Foundation Stage with standards that are mostly above average. They make good progress as they move up through the school, and are above average when assessed at the ages of 7 and 11. Standards have gone up particularly amongst older pupils, who were underachieving in the past. Attainment levels are now high in all the areas tested, although writing skills are less developed than other areas. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make as much progress as other pupils.

Good teaching and learning have contributed to the good progress made. Knowledgeable and capable teachers and effective support staff deliver a good curriculum even though they are teaching two year groups together. Past weaknesses in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have been overcome and pupils now receive a good all-round education, enriched by many extra-curricular activities and by links with parents and the local community.

Good care, guidance and support lead to good personal development. Pupils enjoy coming to school very much, and are rarely absent. They know how to stay safe, fit and healthy, and are well prepared for life after they leave. However, their experience of the wider world is restricted through limited exposure to other cultures, creating a relatively narrow awareness of life in Britain today.

The improved teaching and learning and consequent rising achievement can be attributed to the effective leadership and management that are now in place. This has been inspired by an extremely able interim headteacher who has empowered others to carry on the good work after she leaves. The school has the capacity to go on improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Devote more time to the teaching of writing skills so that pupils become as good at writing as they are in other areas
- Improve pupils' awareness of other cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school and standards are above average.

Most pupils join the Foundation Stage with above average standards, and make good progress, most reaching the targets they are set. They progress further in Years 1 and 2 and, when assessed at the age of 7, standards are significantly above average overall.

However, standards in writing, while above average, are not as strong as in reading and mathematics.

Pupils continue to progress well in Years 3 to 6, with the relative weakness in writing still present in the results of national tests for 11 year olds, but less pronounced. Pupils in Year 6 make good progress from their standards in Year 2. The final group of Year 7 pupils continue to make good progress and are well prepared for their next school. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities progress well, too, as a result of good support, and meet challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave well. Their attendance and punctuality are outstanding. They enjoy school enormously, and parents commented how their children could not wait to get to school.

Links with the village church contribute well to pupils' spiritual development, but, notwithstanding good coverage in the religious education syllabus, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the range of cultures that lie beyond their rural environment. They relate well to each other in school, and show an impressive level of care for one another. 'I feel safe here,' asserted one pupil. Another added, 'Everyone's really friendly, you get on well here.'

Pupils take good advantage of the healthy diet on offer, including fruit and vegetables for all at break, and have water by them in lessons. Enthusiasm for games - in and out of school time - is evident. So too is the sense of community and the family atmosphere: Lavendon School is a real centre of village life. Parents and friends come in to assemblies and to help with lessons. Pupils enjoy fund-raising activities, and have recently won a £1000 prize for ICT work associated with auctioning items on the Internet - just one of the ways in which they are being prepared for life in the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, and are having a significant impact on standards and personal development. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage their classes well. They are well supported by very capable teaching assistants, and by parents and other helpers. Relationships are very good, and pupils engage well in their lessons. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used effectively.

Work is marked well and pupils understand their targets. Teachers, aware of the need to raise standards in all areas, are now expecting a better quality of writing across the curriculum. Good assessment and tracking help teachers organise lessons so that all

pupils' needs are met. Grouping pupils for particular activities is done well, and this is vital with all classes currently straddling two year groups, and most two key stages. The way that all needs are met was demonstrated effectively in the combined Foundation Stage and Year 1 class, where work on mini-beasts was turned into a range of absorbing art and craft activities by the class teacher and her assistant. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support, whether in the classroom or separately elsewhere.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils experience a good, balanced curriculum that fully meets their needs and entitlement. Work is planned so that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, can make good progress. None have been disadvantaged by the transitional arrangement of classes until Year 7 is phased out, or by being taught in two-year groups, and the progress they make in core subjects is evidence of this. The school acknowledges, however, that a greater focus on writing skills is needed. The under-emphasis on other cultures in the curriculum is also acknowledged by the school.

Any weaknesses in provision for ICT have been overcome, and pupils now have good access to a well-organised range of technology. Many are competent musicians: recorder and clarinet players played pieces in an assembly that they had performed the day before in the Milton Keynes Theatre. A specialist sports coach works with each class on Fridays, and a secondary school French teacher comes in to teach Years 6 and 7. Pupils also take up opportunities given by a wide range of activities after school, which, along with visitors, visits and residential trips, enrich their experience of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. 'Children feel very nurtured here,' said one parent. Another commented on the extra care given to a vulnerable child.

Procedures for child protection and risk assessment are sound. Health and safety procedures are understood by all staff. The school is well organised when it comes to helping pupils to stay safe, fit and healthy. Assessment and tracking procedures ensure that pupils are shown what they need to do next in order to make progress. Older pupils, in particular, confidently discuss their targets. Sex and relationships education is well provided for in science lessons for the older pupils, exemplified well by the visit of a young mother and baby to a Year 6 lesson to talk about her own experience of childbirth within a family context. Pupils are well prepared for later life, not only in developing key skills and enterprise attitudes, but also emotionally and socially.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This was an area of serious weakness at the time of the last inspection. The fact that it is now good is largely due to the changes brought about by the highly effective interim headteacher, placed here two years ago by the local authority. Her aim to create a 'leaderful' school has been a success. The staff who have remained and those who have joined the school all now play a significant role in leadership and management; senior members of staff have had relevant training and all have been encouraged to take ownership of their areas of responsibility. As a result, monitoring is now effective, leading to consistently good teaching and standards that continue to rise, not least amongst older pupils, where progress had been weakest before.

The school knows itself well, albeit it was cautious in its evaluation of where it has got to. The governing body are given detailed reports of curriculum areas. In turn, they visit the school, ask questions and are clearly now an effective team. Finances are well managed, and the school is very well resourced. Parents are consulted regularly, and speak highly of the school: one spoke of a 'real sense of the school moving forwards'.

The action planning that followed the last inspection has remained the focus for improvements. The changes, particularly the empowering of other staff to lead and manage effectively, have had an impact on teaching and learning and ultimately on achievement. Even though the interim headteacher is now moving on, what has been put in place is a secure basis for future improvement.

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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	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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

Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. A special thank you to those who talked to me. I really enjoyed looking at your work and watching you in lessons and assembly. The inspection showed me that you go to a good school which has improved a lot.

Why I believe your school is good* you make good progress in your work * you are developing very well as young people* you behave well, and really enjoy being at school* you don't miss much school because of absences* you have an excellent headteacher, who has built up a good team to run the school* you are taught useful and interesting things* the teachers and other staff help you to learn well* they support and look after you very well* your parents are very happy with the school.

What I have asked your school to do now* help you to improve your writing skills* help you to discover more about people who live different lives from you, especially those from different cultural backgrounds.I wish you well in the future and hope that you will always be as happy as you are at Lavendon School.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Marfleet

Lead Inspector