



# Cedars Combined School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110399  
**LEA** Milton Keynes LEA  
**Inspection number** 278424  
**Inspection dates** 28 November 2005 to 29 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Bradley Simmons HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Bury Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Newport Pagnell
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 12		Buckinghamshire MK16 0DT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 610561
<b>Number on roll</b>	316	<b>Fax number</b>	01908 610382
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Michael Chalmers
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Cox

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 12	<b>Inspection dates</b> 28 November 2005 - 29 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278424
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cedars Combined School is situated in the town of Newport Pagnell in north east Buckinghamshire, an area of the county which now forms part of the borough of Milton Keynes. Newport Pagnell is a relatively settled community within the borough and most pupils both begin and complete their primary education at this school. The published percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is low (1.4%) but this may not reflect the true figure; some parents choose not to apply for this concession as the local authority does not provide a hot meal. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is in line with the national average. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Over 90% of the pupils at the school are from a White British background. In common with other schools in Newport Pagnell, the school's roll has dropped in recent years. As a consequence of the local authority's decision to change the age of transfer to secondary school, there will be no Year 7 classes from September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

A parent noted: 'We have chosen to send our children to this school because of the commitment and energy that is given to developing the whole child'. The great majority of parents are very satisfied with Cedars Combined and they are right to be so. It is an effective school with several outstanding features and provides good value for money. The headteacher is passionate about raising standards in all areas of school life. Her vision for improvement is shared by the senior leaders. Together they have developed an effective staff team. Teaching has improved. It is now good and there is some exemplary practice. As a result, pupils achieve well overall and attain high standards. The school has good procedures to evaluate its own performance, and staff act on their findings. The senior leadership team are aware that, although improved, pupils' progress in writing remains an area for development and acknowledge the need to improve the pace and rigour of the teaching of phonics to younger children in order to help pupils attain better standards in spelling and writing. The assessment of pupils is strong. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is tracked across the school. Marking in some classes is outstanding and is a fundamental tool in helping pupils to make better progress. In a few classes, however, marking does not provide pupils with the guidance they need to make the progress of which they are capable, especially in writing. Target setting procedures for pupils are well embedded and annual targets in reading, writing and mathematics are developed for each cohort; the school improvement plan should be sharpened to include these targets to promote still further the school's accountability to the governors. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall. The school has clear capacity to improve as demonstrated by the progress made since the last inspection.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Strengthen the rigour and increase the rate of the teaching of phonics\* Improve marking in some classes to reach the level of the best\* Sharpen school improvement planning to include annual reading, writing and mathematics targets for each year group.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The school correctly believes that achievement and standards are good. When pupils start their reception year, their attainment is as expected for children of this age. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress and, overall, pupils attain standards which are above national averages by the time they leave the school. This represents significant improvement since the last inspection and is a direct result of clearly focused self evaluation procedures which have led to the school taking appropriate and effective action to improve achievement and standards. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to their starting points. The school sets challenging

targets for pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and science and pupils meet these in all areas except writing. Although the school has acted successfully to improve pupils' progress in writing, the school realises there is more to be done, particularly to improve standards in spelling.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Assemblies are reflective occasions when pupils have the opportunity to learn more about Christian beliefs and traditions and to consider moral issues. They sing and are given the opportunity to pray. They demonstrate a good awareness of their own and different cultures and faiths, heightened through assemblies, RE, geography and visits to places of interest. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils are friendly and polite. They know the difference between right and wrong and their understanding is underpinned by 'the four C's' which form the school's motto: Care, Concern, Courtesy and Community. Pupils demonstrate a quiet enjoyment of learning through both their attentiveness during lessons and their very high level of attendance. Pupils behave safely during lessons and playtimes. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, but admit that their knowledge about healthy eating is sometimes not reflected in the food they choose to eat. Parents told inspectors that they believe the provision of a nutritionally balanced hot lunch would improve this situation. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community, for example by collecting food for Harvest Festival boxes to give to elderly people. Pupils work effectively in pairs and teams, both during lessons and when helping around the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school evaluates teaching as good overall with some outstanding features. Inspectors agree. During this inspection some exemplary practice was observed and no lessons were less than satisfactory. Over time, teaching enables pupils to make good progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. The best lessons were underpinned by thorough planning, and teachers used excellent questioning skills to assess, support and extend pupils' learning. Teachers used interactive whiteboards particularly effectively when they demonstrated new concepts. Good relationships between pupils, their teachers and effectively deployed support staff ensured focused and attentive responses from all pupils, including those with special needs. Where teaching was less strong, teachers' explanations occasionally lacked clarity and pupils were not as highly focused. The school realises that the rigour of the teaching of phonics to younger pupils could be strengthened. At present, the rate of phonics teaching is too slow over time and the assessment of pupils' phonetic abilities is not precise enough to pinpoint the difficulties of individuals. As a result, pupils do not

use their phonetic skills consistently to support their spelling at a later stage. This in turn affects the development of pupils' writing skills. The best marking is outstanding, particularly in English and mathematics. However, this quality is not found in all classes so pupils do not always have a clear direction given to them in order to improve upon their work and make better progress, particularly in writing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges its curriculum to be good overall and inspection evidence confirms this. In addition, extra-curricular provision is outstanding; the many clubs and residential and day visits enthuse pupils and enhance their learning effectively. The school meets all statutory requirements within the context of a spectrum of linked activities. Appropriate time is given to the teaching of basic skills in all year groups and sound links are made between subjects to create a coherent and balanced learning experience for pupils. Special needs are met thoughtfully. Work is planned thoroughly at different levels so pupils' knowledge and understanding are developed effectively. Pupils learn how to stay safe and be healthy within well structured personal, social and health sessions and physical education lessons. Pupils now have good opportunities to develop and use their information and communication technology skills across the curriculum; this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Cedars Combined provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. All staff have up-to-date training on the very thorough child protection procedures. Proper checks are carried out on all staff before they join the school, and on parent helpers. These checks are updated regularly. There are good systems to deal with the very few incidences of bullying that occur; pupils feel safe at school and know that there is someone to whom they can turn if they are worried or in trouble. Procedures to guide pupils academically are good. Pupils have personal targets in reading, writing and mathematics. They show an increasing awareness and appreciation of these targets as they move through the school. The targets make a significant contribution to supporting pupils' progress in those classes where marking consistently reminds pupils of the need to address them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good with several outstanding features. The headteacher has a demonstrable commitment to providing the best possible education for every child at this school. Individual parents who noted concerns about the high turnover of teachers since the last inspection should be assured that the headteacher has steadily built an effective and dedicated staff, who have improved the progress pupils make and the standards they attain. The responsibility for school improvement

is shared by all members of staff, and several members of the senior leadership team have successfully coached and mentored their colleagues to improve standards of teaching and learning across the school. The difficult process of managing falling pupil numbers has been well handled by both the headteacher and the governing body. At times, they have clearly taken difficult decisions which parents found unpalatable. They have attempted, largely successfully, to allay parents' worries whilst taking effective steps to ensure the school has continued to improve and lives within the resources provided by the local authority. The governing body play a full part in both challenging and supporting the senior leadership team in their work. The chair of governors demonstrates an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and of its areas for development. Senior leaders provide information which is timely, relevant and transparent. The school improvement plan guides the work of the school but should be sharpened; although covering all those areas that the school has identified for improvement, the plan should contain annual reading, writing and mathematics targets to promote still further the school's accountability to governors. The school demonstrates a clear capacity for further improvement.

**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](http://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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### 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>	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

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

<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	1	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	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**

Thank you for your hospitality and help when we visited your school recently. Thank you also for the time you gave to answering our questions. My colleague, Vanessa Ward, explained to the school council that I would write to tell you what we found out.

Here are just a few of the things we liked about your school: \* your headteacher, Mrs. Cox, wants the very best for all of you\* your teachers make a good team and they teach you well\* you work hard and make good progress\* you behave well and are friendly to each other and polite to visitors; you understand the importance of the four C's - Care, Concern, Courtesy and Community\* you feel safe at school, and you enjoy being there.

Of course, there are a few things that we want to be better. For you, the most important point is to read the comments your teachers make when they mark your books. We have asked your teachers to make sure that their marking is as good as possible. Please make sure you read and think about what they have written. This will help you to achieve the targets they have set for you.