



# Swallowfield Lower School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109429  
**Local Authority** BEDFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288367  
**Inspection dates** 5–6 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Christopher Deane-Hall

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Weathercock Close
<b>School category</b>	Community		Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		Bedfordshire MK17 8SL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 582101
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	194	<b>Fax number</b>	01908 582101
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Buck
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kim Brewer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 April 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average lower school situated in Woburn Sands. It serves an area of mainly owner occupied properties. The number of children eligible for free school meals is low. Most children are White British with a few of mixed heritage. Only a few children have English as an additional language. Over half of the children travel to the school from outlying areas, mostly from Milton Keynes. No children have a statement of special educational need. When children start school in Reception their skills and knowledge are average for children of their age. The school has achieved Investors in People, a Curriculum Award for personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE), the Healthy School Award and the School Achievement Award.

## 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's overall effectiveness is good and it provides good value for money. It has some outstanding features, particularly in the way it cares for the children and promotes their personal development. Children and parents have positive views of the school. One parent said, 'I have found the general environment supportive and nurturing.' Children make good progress from entry through to Year 4 and achieve well in English, mathematics and science. The 2006 national assessments show a sharp rise in standards in Year 2. In that year standards were exceptionally high. Good achievement is the result of a wide range of learning activities in lessons and in after school clubs, and good teaching. Children get off to a good start in Reception and reach above average standards by the time they leave that class. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. A school council member felt that 'we are quite healthy and have lots of opportunities for sport.' Children are well behaved, polite and aware of the needs of others. Attendance is good and improving. The school has sufficiently robust systems to encourage all children to come to school.

Teaching is consistently good. There is some outstanding teaching when lessons are closely based upon previous learning and where high expectations of what children can do are shared with the class. Other contributory factors to successful learning include the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and strong relationships with the children. There are some good examples of teachers boosting children's confidence in their marking but few examples of them helping children to improve their work by providing clear step by step guidance through marking. The school provides a good range of activities to help children to learn. These include good opportunities for physical education and creative activity, for example, in art. ICT is increasingly used to aid learning and progress. The school has good procedures to support children who find learning difficult. Overall, care guidance and support are outstanding so that children feel very safe and secure in school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future which is shared by all staff and governors. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement which is reflected in the good school development plan. This highlights the priorities for improvement and the impact on learning. However, systems for checking children's progress in science are not as effective as those in English and mathematics. The school has successfully addressed a dip in achievement and standards in 2005. The governing body has effectively welcomed a number of new members, but still needs to develop its strategic role. It has an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what it needs to improve. However, it has not yet developed a clear view on the long-term future of the school. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the last inspection, carefully managed a deficit budget and falling roll. Through its secure system for checking how well children are doing, the school recognises that boys do not achieve as well as girls in writing and has put in place effective measures to deal with the issue. The school is well placed to continue improving.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of boys in writing so that they achieve as well as girls.
- Ensure that children's progress in science is tracked as effectively as it is in English and mathematics.
- Develop the strategic role of the governing body.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Trends over recent years show standards in Year 2 to be above the national average and, in 2006, exceptionally high. In the Foundation Stage children achieve well so that by the time they enter Year 1 they are slightly above the level expected. They make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development and in communication skills. Between Years 2 and 4 children make faster progress than the average so that when they leave the school they are solidly above the level expected and in some years well above. The 2005 national test results show a dip on previous years because too few boys reached the higher levels in reading and writing and there was a much larger number of children who found learning difficult. The school addressed this issue and the results for 2006 show a sharp rise. Girls' achievement was better than that of boys in 2006. The results show that there was good achievement from all groups, including those who find learning hard.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They take their responsibilities seriously, undertaking such roles as 'The Friendship Squad' diligently. School council representatives are extremely active. Children clearly value belonging to a caring community and contribute significantly to both the school and wider communities, for example they raise considerable funds to support others. They feel safe in school through the ethos of respect and consideration underpinned in assemblies and by adults in school. They have ample opportunity for quiet reflection on issues of concern to them in assemblies, which reflect the school's ethos. Their good attendance is a clear indicator of how much children enjoy school, as is the enthusiastic way they talk about how teachers make lessons interesting and 'help us a lot'. Play at break times is active and energetic but children also have a care for those engaged in quieter pastimes so that breaks are happy and harmonious occasions. They adopt healthy lifestyles by eating healthily and taking lots of physical exercise. Children's behaviour is extremely good. They are well prepared for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan interesting and varied activities that ensure that children behave well and enjoy lessons. They are mindful of children's learning needs and carefully match work to the children's abilities. They have high expectations, encouraging children to develop good learning habits, which includes the review of their own work. They know that children find ICT helpful in their learning and have worked successfully to provide this in different subjects. This helps children, especially boys, focus and concentrate well. The best teaching uses a variety of different teaching styles, makes sure that work is sufficiently challenging and ensures that lessons move at a brisk pace with energy and humour. However, marking does not always provide children with sufficient information to help them to know how to achieve their targets. Teaching assistants give good support in lessons, especially to those who find learning hard so that children make good progress and achieve their targets.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a broad, interesting and stimulating curriculum. It is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors, such as World War II veterans and musicians, and by links with the local middle school. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is exciting and enhances learning very effectively. Good links are made between subjects, which makes learning interesting and more meaningful. Provision for English, mathematics and science is good. Children learn how to stay safe and keep healthy through the programme for PHSCE. Provision for more able children and for those with English as an additional language is good. Children who find learning difficult have effective support and the specialist help they receive enhances their learning. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. Staff use a wide range of learning opportunities to help children to improve their literacy. These have had a positive effect on children's motivation and achievement. However, more needs to be done to motivate boys to improve their progress in writing. Good opportunities exist to help children to contribute to the wider community. For example, the International School Award, with its links to a school in Sri Lanka and the Global Learning Initiative. These rich learning opportunities provide interest, enjoyment and achievement which stimulate and contribute to children's enjoyment and positive contribution to their community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Children are looked after exceptionally well. Parents feel confident that their children are safe and well cared for. The school has recently gained the County Food Mark.

Very good provision is made for pupils with specific medical or personal needs. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are effectively and conscientiously observed. Child protection procedures and all safeguarding measures are clear and widely understood. Children are confident that they can approach staff with any difficulties and that any problems will be dealt with very efficiently. On the rare occasions when bullying does occur, the school deals promptly and very effectively with it. The school regularly surveys children's views and has established very good procedures to allow them to participate in the decision making process. There are good systems for checking how well children are doing in English and mathematics, although they are not as well developed in science. Assessment information is used well and ensures that children know their targets for improvement. The school also has good systems for supporting and improving children's confidence through, for example, helpful comments in their books.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has established an excellent caring ethos in which all children are valued as individuals. She shares her vision for the future of the school with all staff and governors so that an excellent team spirit prevails. Governors have recently welcomed several new members and offer good support to the school whilst expecting it to account for its performance. As a result, the school knows how well it is doing and what to do to improve. For instance, the whole school focus on literacy has been successful in raising standards. Although governors play an active role in the life of the school they have yet to develop the strategic aspect of their role in order to support the school's long-term future. The school is very effective in ensuring that all children have equal access to all that the school offers. The shared leadership of aspects of the school's work within the senior management team works well and allows the school to work closely with other schools to share information and good practice.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 February 2007

Dear Children

Swallowfield Lower School, Weathercock Close, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, MK17 8SL

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for helping us during the inspection. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking with so many of you. This letter is to tell you what we think about your school.

We think you go to a good school where your teachers look after you exceptionally well. Your behaviour is excellent, many of you have a lot of tasks around the school, and the school council does a good job of letting teachers know what you think about things. You learn a lot in lessons and particularly enjoy your ICT work. However, some of the boys need to work hard in writing lessons.

Many of you are good learners and this shows in the good progress you make in lessons. In 2005 standards in Year 2 slipped a bit because several of you in that year found learning difficult. However, last summer standards were extremely high. You told us that sometimes teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work but that sometimes it isn't made clear enough. The teachers have good ways to check how well you are doing in reading, writing and mathematics but they are not so good in science. We also think that Mrs Brewer, the governors and the teachers have good plans to make the school even better, but that the governors need to think more about the long-term plans for the school.

These are things that we think could be improved:

- The boys could try a bit more and make better progress in writing.
- The way your teachers check how well you are doing in science.
- The governors' long-term plans for the future of the school.

You can do your bit to help by making sure that you carry on working hard and thinking about what sort of things help you to learn in lessons, and telling your teachers about these.

Best wishes,

Christopher Deane-Hall

Lead Inspector