



Edith Cavell Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109433
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288369
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	First	School address	Manton Lane
School category	Community		Bedford
Age range of pupils	3–9		Bedfordshire MK41 7NH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 345636
Number on roll (school)	254	Fax number	01234 345636
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew McGrorey
		Headteacher	Mrs Maggie Lucas
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002		

Age group 3–9	Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007	Inspection number 288369
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. About half the pupils come from outside the immediate area, which covers one of the poorer wards in Bedford, and the rest live within it. Close to half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Indian and Pakistani. A high proportion speak English as an additional language and a small minority of them are at an early stage of learning English. The attainment of most, but not all, children on starting school is below average. The proportion taking a free school meal is broadly average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. The school is the only lower school in Bedford that includes a unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There are six pupils in the unit. The school is part of the Bedford Excellence Cluster. It provides after-school care, and has introduced a breakfast club recently. The school has recently been awarded the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are extremely positive about it. One wrote: 'The staff are caring, friendly and genuine. They go the extra mile and allow your child to be an individual.' The pupils agree, saying, 'Teachers encourage us and are really helpful.'

An excellent feature is the way that pupils with ASD are integrated into the school. This makes a very positive contribution to the good personal development of all pupils. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils are polite and friendly to visitors. They become confident to take on a range of responsibilities because they are given such good care, support and guidance. The outstanding emphasis on healthy lifestyles and keeping safe means that pupils know what makes a healthy meal and are keen to record that they have eaten one at lunchtime! Extremely effective partnerships, such as with parents and with the specialist staff who support pupils with learning difficulties, greatly benefit pupils' learning. The school's very strong emphasis on equal opportunities for all pupils promotes cohesion in the local community very well.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy the good curriculum with its wide range of visits and visitors. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are particularly gifted is good. The curriculum is very broad and the way that some subjects are taught through themes enriches pupils' learning.

Pupils achieve well. Children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception class and most reach the standards expected for their age by the beginning of Year 1, because of the very strong emphasis on language development. They make good progress throughout the school. Between 2001 and 2003, the school went through a period of disruption with three changes of headteacher and the loss of the senior leadership team. There were many changes of teachers in Years 1 and 2. All this contributed to a sharp drop in standards. On appointment in 2003, the headteacher set about raising standards and since then standards in Year 2 have risen steadily to above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006. At the end of Year 4, standards were broadly average in 2006, representing good progress for a year group that reached below average standards when they were in Year 2. There is also a very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in the year group. It is taking time for standards to rise significantly at the end of Year 4 because the older pupils often have so much ground to make up. However, all pupils are now achieving well and making good progress as they move through the school.

Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is lively and encourages them. Support staff give very effective help, particularly in the Nursery and Reception class and when pupils with ASD join their peers for lessons. Pupils have their own targets in writing and mathematics but teachers' marking does not always help them to know how well they have progressed towards the targets. Consistent target setting is not established more widely.

The school's success is due to good leadership and management. There is a strong sense of team spirit between teachers, support staff and governors. The headteacher,

assistant headteacher and senior leadership team monitor progress thoroughly. They have an accurate view about how well the school is doing and canvas the views of all members of the school community to identify areas for improvement. Subject leaders fulfil their roles well, but the way in which they monitor their subjects is inconsistent and so some aspects are not looked at across all subjects. This means that the school does not have a whole school view, for example about the use of information and communication technology in each subject. Overall, value for money is good and the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen monitoring across subjects by agreeing common themes to be evaluated by subject leaders.
- Improve target setting for individuals across subjects and ensure that teachers' marking reflects progress towards the targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception class because the quality of teaching is good and they are offered exciting things to do. Not all children in the Nursery transfer to the Reception class and some have had varied pre-school provision if they join in Reception. Children achieve well and reach the standards expected by the beginning of Year 1 because the school takes every effort to improve their language skills. The use of specific programmes designed to support early reading and mathematical skills is having a positive impact on standards.

Pupils make good progress through Years 1 to 4. Achievement is good. This is reflected in the Year 2 assessments for 2006, where standards rose to above average in reading, writing and mathematics from broadly average when pupils entered Year 1. Assessments for pupils in Year 4 in 2006 showed that they had reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics from below average when they were in Year 2. Similar standards were seen in lessons during the inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their behaviour is excellent. One pupil with ASD said, 'We try really hard to concentrate and learn well.' This is clearly visible in pupils' excellent attitude in classrooms and contributes to their good learning. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below average, mainly due to a small number of families taking their children on extended holidays to India or Pakistan. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe, for instance when choosing healthy meals at lunchtime and taking part in a wide variety of sporting activities. They make a good contribution to the community. Older pupils act as buddies

to younger ones and the school council takes its role seriously, having recently established the school shop. Pupils develop research skills through their link with the local upper school. A student there has trained pupils to solve problems, for example how best to store packed lunch boxes, and the pupils conduct interviews and devise questionnaires to solve the problem. This contributes very positively to their personal development and helps to prepare them for their future lives. Pupils develop a good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the school's caring ethos and the many opportunities to celebrate the diverse range of cultures represented in the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' planning is detailed and includes provision for those pupils with different learning needs and abilities, including those with ASD, whose individualised targets are precise and are followed closely. Elsewhere, pupils have individual targets for writing and mathematics, but these have not yet been extended to include reading and science. Computers and other technology are used effectively to demonstrate teaching points and engage pupils' interest. This makes lessons lively and stimulating. Good classroom management means that pupils work well individually and in groups. All of this leads to good progress

Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own work to see if they have achieved the learning intentions in their lessons. Marking is carried out promptly and accurately. While it often encourages pupils strongly, it only sometimes offers clear statements about what they should do to improve. Nevertheless, in lessons, teachers and assistants always actively work alongside pupils, questioning and challenging them well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned. Subject teaching is enriched by the grouping of areas like history and geography into weekly projects for study, enabling pupils to spend more time on them and achieve a higher standard of work. The school is currently improving provision for science by giving more emphasis to investigative skills. A good global partnership has been formed this year with a school in Uganda which has already provided stimulating correspondence with the children there.

The programme of personal, social and health education effectively promotes pupils' good personal development and contributes to the excellent integration of pupils with ASD, who are full members of the school community. There is a good range of additional activities before and after school which are well supported and much enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's caring ethos means that pupils and their parents feel valued. The outstanding care, guidance and support given to pupils with ASD means that they make excellent progress. One of these pupils said, 'School is fantastic. I really love it!' The learning mentor provides good support to vulnerable pupils and makes a positive contribution to their progress and their personal development. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and child protection procedures are in place. Pupils' progress is well tracked and those who need extra support are quickly identified. However, the limitations of the marking and target setting arrangements mean that day to day academic guidance can be improved further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership shown by the headteacher and the assistant headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. They thoroughly monitor standards and achievement to identify areas for improvement and successfully address any areas of weakness. As a result, standards are rising. They, together with the governors, have worked diligently to bring the school back on track after the difficult period of a few years ago. There is a strong sense of team spirit between teachers, support staff and governors. All fulfil their management roles effectively. However, subject leaders do not always have a common theme when they monitor their subjects where this would be appropriate, so some aspects are not looked at consistently. The governors support the school very effectively and have recently sought the views of all members of the school community to steer the school further forward. They know that they could improve their effectiveness by formally recording the outcomes of their challenging questions.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

2 March 2007

Dear Children

Edith Cavell Lower School, Manton Lane, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK41 7NH

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we found out.

You told us that you go to a friendly school and we agree with you. We thought your behaviour was excellent and that you were polite to visitors. You have lots of interesting things to do in lessons and all the grown ups take care of you very well and help you learn. We liked the way that some of you do special projects to find things out, such as when you found the best way to store lunch boxes. Your families know that you go to a good school.

We have asked Mrs Lucas and the teachers to tell you what you need to learn next when they mark your work. Most of you have some targets, especially in writing and mathematics, and we have asked if you could have some targets for other parts of your English work, and for science. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can. We have also asked that the teachers who have responsibility for subjects agree what they will check on when they look at your work and how you are taught.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at Edith Cavell Lower School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead Inspector