



Pinchmill Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109451
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288378
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector Roger Brown

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Old Road
School category	Community		Felmersham, Bedford
Age range of pupils	5–9		Bedfordshire MK43 7JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234781371
Number on roll (school)	74	Fax number	01234783128
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Chandler
		Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–9	28–29 November 2006	288378

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village school serving the local community and the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The area is advantaged both socially and economically and this is reflected in the very small number of pupils eligible for a free school meal. A few pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. There have been very significant changes to the school in the last five years. Pupil numbers have doubled, all the staff have changed, the building has had major modifications, and all but one governor is new to the school. The school has secured awards for Artsmark Gold, Healthy School status and ECO Schools Green Flag.

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 with some outstanding features. The current headteacher, who is due to leave at the end of term, has played a key role in re-establishing the direction of the school following the changes. The governors give great support to the school, and together with the headteacher have an excellent understanding of the issues facing the school. The strengths of the school include, high standards, its pivotal role in supporting and fostering the village community, as well as the highly effective links and partnerships it has built with other schools and organisations. The pupils really enjoy being at school, their level of attendance is excellent and they particularly enjoy and respond well to the responsibilities they are given. All parents are very positive about the school. One parent wrote, 'We just wish our daughter had the opportunity to stay on until Years 5 and 6.' Everyone, whatever their background or circumstances is welcomed and included in all that the school offers.

Standards are high. The provision in the Foundation Stage is now good; the recent changes and improvements are giving the children good opportunities to play, explore and develop their learning in a creative manner. Standards in reading are excellent throughout the school; they are good in writing, and whilst standards in mathematics are consistently above the national average they are not as high as those attained in English. The school recognises that the pupils' achievements could be higher in mathematics and has plans in place to improve provision in this subject. Standards in science and in information and communication technology (ICT) are also well above those expected.

Learning is good across the school. This is because the teachers and the very competent teaching assistants consistently use effective strategies to develop pupils' learning. The teachers' confidence has been boosted by the success they have achieved in raising standards and by the positive attitude of the current leadership. However, the imminent change in leadership has left the teachers uncertain about their own roles in leading developments at the school.

The pupils' personal development is good. Despite its small size, the school works hard to ensure that the pupils get many opportunities to experience a wide range of activities that actively promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is good, they are very aware of the school's 'Charter of Rights' and they actively follow the principles of healthy eating and regular exercise they have been taught. This is a safe school and the pupils are well cared for. They receive excellent guidance and support; all pupils know who to turn to if they have problems. The arrangements for children who transfer from the local play group into the school are very effective as are the arrangements for pupils in Year 4 who are going to the middle school. Gifted and talented pupils are given good opportunities to help them reach their potential.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Systems for the evaluation of practice, including performance management and school improvement give the leadership a comprehensive understanding of how well the school is doing and what

needs to be worked on. Financial procedures and practices are well established and scrupulously maintained. The school was highly rated at the time of the last inspection and despite a period of significant change it is now back on track as a successful school which provides good value for money. With continuing strong leadership the school clearly has a good capacity to improve and to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on raising pupils' achievements in mathematics.
- Support the teachers in developing their role in leading improvements and developments at the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children's skills, knowledge and understanding at the end of their Reception year are good; most children achieve beyond the goals for learning expected of this age. By the end of Year 2, teachers' assessments show that overall standards are above average in all respects, and well above in most areas. Standards in reading are excellent, standards in writing are now well above average, having shown a marked improvement last year. Standards in mathematics are above average, but not as high as in reading and writing. The same pattern of achievement continues into Key Stage 2 with standards in reading still excellent and almost as high in writing, and although pupils' progress in mathematics improves it is not yet in line with standards achieved in English. Almost all pupils meet the challenging targets they are set. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as those with special gifts and talents also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. These are happy pupils, who, from the time they enter school, behave well and are enthusiastic about learning. Their enjoyment of school, reflected in their outstanding attendance, contributes significantly to their achievement. At the heart of the school's work is its commitment to developing responsible citizens and giving pupils the skills they will need when they are adults. This is demonstrated by the role of the school in sharing facilities and activities with the village, by its partnerships with other schools and organisations and by its commitment to teaching the pupils to care for their environment. Consequently pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Pupils consistently demonstrate qualities, which include consideration for others and cooperation and teamwork. A few pupils however are not able to assess the consequences of their actions in terms of the risk to themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ably supported by the teaching assistants motivate pupils well. Lesson planning is consistent and thorough. Teachers' classroom management skills are good. The teaching of writing has improved as a direct result of the teachers focus on this aspect. This has boosted teachers' confidence in the processes they use and consequently they are well placed to apply their skills and knowledge to improving pupils' achievements in mathematics, the key area the school has identified for improvement. The teachers are now particularly skilful at using assessment procedures to identify exactly what each pupil needs to learn to progress further. Pupils are set challenging targets and the older pupils in particular are aware of what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported by teaching assistants and progress well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good and in some respects excellent. The curriculum content is truly broad and balanced. The arts, physical education (PE) and humanities all have a high profile and ICT is used well both to support other subjects and as a means for pupils to explore and research their own interests. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. Very strong links with other schools allow the pupils to experience opportunities for co-operating with and working alongside new friends or for the older ones, to experience being taught a foreign language. The recent improvements to the Foundation Stage curriculum are already beginning to have an impact on children's learning, and plans are in hand to extend and develop the outdoor play to improve provision still further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding aspect of the school's work. Pupils are happy and secure with all necessary procedures in place to protect them in school. Pupils' personal and academic development are supported very effectively by all the staff. The school's systems ensures all pupils' progress is tracked very efficiently and the teachers make very good use of this information to target improvements in groups and individuals. Very effective induction arrangements mean that children starting school settle down to learning very quickly. All the parents are extremely supportive of the work of the school, for instance, one parent wrote 'I am delighted with the reception my daughter has received since her transition into the schooling system. ... Wonderful school ... wonderful teachers.' Transfer arrangements to the middle school are also very effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the governors have a clear and accurate picture of the school's development and its effectiveness. The role of the current headteacher has been pivotal in ensuring this school's success, most noticeably in restoring the morale and confidence of the staff following a period of change. The leadership team makes good use of the school improvement process to evaluate and assess what works well and what needs to be improved, but the teachers do not yet have the confidence to initiate change themselves and continue to need further support and development. The governors are very effective, they not only support and promote the school, but also act as an insightful critical friend overseeing the developments and checking progress. Financial management is good; the school seeks to ensure that it always secures best value for money. One outcome of this policy can be seen in the high quality, refurbished and extended building.

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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	1
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	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

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	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	1

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	1
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

30 November 2006

Dear Children

Pinchmill Lower School, The Old Road, Felmersham, Bedfordshire MK43 7JD

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. It was a real pleasure to be with you. I enjoyed watching your classes, and I really enjoyed talking to you about your work.

What I liked most about your school was:

- The way that everybody, whatever their background, gets on well in your school.
- The fact that you enjoy your school, you learn well, and think learning is fun.
- There is so much for you to learn about, - your music, art, French, PE and so on.
- I really liked the way your teachers listen to you and when you come up with a good idea, such as ways to look after the environment, they help you put it into action.
- The excellent way your governors are involved in the school, help to make it part of the community and really find many ways to help you.

However I would like:

- Your teachers to help you to achieve even higher standards in mathematics.
- Your new headteacher to help your teachers to lead more improvements and developments at the school.

Almost all of your parents wrote to me, and everyone of them said that they think that you go to a really good school, and I agree with them. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with you in school.

Best wishes for the future.

Roger Brown

Lead inspector