

Kempston Rural Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109463
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	288385
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Moffat
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Stanbridge
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Church End Kempston Bedford Bedfordshire MK43 8RH
Telephone number	01234854286
Fax number	01234 854286

Age group	5–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a few who are from minority ethnic groups. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below expectations. The proportion of pupils who find learning more difficult or who have a statement of special educational need is higher than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has received awards for Investors in People and the Bedfordshire Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Kempston Rural Lower is an effective school and gives good value for money. It has a few outstanding features. The school's leadership and management are effective. Their commitment shows a good capacity to improve the quality of education further. The school has improved well since the last inspection. For example, standards have risen steadily and teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT) has developed significantly. Self-evaluation is accurate and used well. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and she is supported by skilled teaching staff. A really good team spirit unifies the staff of the school. The school's leadership places a great importance on welcoming pupils from all backgrounds and abilities and includes them well in all school activities. The school and staff work effectively to draw the community together. Virtually all parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school and have an outstanding partnership with it. One parent summed it up in saying: 'This is a wonderful school; because of its small size, all the children and staff know each other. There is a genuine caring environment here and the children flourish. I'm thrilled that my child is a pupil and would recommend it to all.'

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a significant strength of the school and is outstanding. This is mostly as a result of the good care, guidance and support they receive from all staff. Pupils are extremely happy in school and enjoy all the activities available. 'I love school. It's the best place in the world.' This was the opinion of one pupil, which summed up the views of many. Relationships between staff and pupils are very well established. Their adoption of healthy and safe lifestyles is outstanding. They know exceptionally clearly how to keep themselves healthy. Some pupils eat several portions of fruit or vegetables a day and take part in daily exercise sessions. They know how to cross the road safely and some have attended a first-aid club.

The school's leadership ensures that pupils' learning and progress are at the centre of everything that is planned. As a result, standards are above those expected by the time pupils leave in Year 4 and their achievement is good. Pupils progress well in reading and mathematics. The school has rightly identified that although pupils achieve satisfactorily in writing, it could be even better. Teaching and learning are good; they are effective in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and future working lives. Teachers have high expectations and so pupils develop their basic skills well. The school's use of assessment activities is sound. Teachers mark books carefully and give feedback on whether the learning intention has been attained. However, pupils' individual targets are not referred to sufficiently and so they do not know how well they are working towards them. The curriculum is good. Staff plan exciting projects which develop pupils' skills in several areas of learning together. After-school and lunchtime clubs allow many pupils, especially those who are gifted and talented, to develop their sports and creative skills effectively. The school enriches pupils' taught day with French lessons, from the Reception Class to Year 4. Provision for children in Reception is good. They also progress well, reaching the expected standards by the end of their first year. However, the planning for the outside learning area is not linked well to the skills that they are learning inside the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress that pupils make in writing skills so that it is as good as other key areas of learning.

- Develop further the use of teachers' feedback so that pupils gain more information about whether they have met their individual targets.
- Improve the planning for the outside learning area in the Reception Class so that it links closely with the skills children are developing inside the classroom.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Class assemblies and displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements well. Many pupils start at school with levels of skill in key areas of learning which are below those expected for four year olds. They achieve well in the Reception Year such that standards are in line with expectations by the start of Year 1. This is because staff use practical activities and resources well.

Standards vary considerably from year to year because there are such small numbers of pupils in some year groups. In 2006, results in Year 2 were above average, with more able pupils performing well. Standards are broadly average in the present Year 2 and this year group has an above average proportion of pupils who find learning difficult. Pupils make good progress. Those who speak English as an additional language achieve well.

In 2006, standards in Year 4 were above expectations and achievement for these pupils was good. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress. Those who find learning more difficult achieve well because they receive valuable support and guidance. Pupils make steady progress in writing but the school is working to improve and accelerate this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils work happily together and support each other because staff manage them really effectively. Pupils' self-esteem is high as a result of the positive ways that staff speak to them and inspire them to have a go at new activities. They respect others' beliefs extremely well and celebrate festivals from other cultures, such as the Chinese New Year. Pupils from different backgrounds work harmoniously together. They have really positive attitudes towards school. They enjoy their learning and, as a result, attendance is above the national average. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Their independence is developed well and they are encouraged, through the school council and suggestion boxes, to share ideas about how to improve the school. They make an excellent contribution to the community. Pupils raise money for three charities each year, one is locally based and two are national or international. A considerable number are involved in maintaining a school garden. Pupils are regularly involved in the church fete and have raised money for a local ambulance fund.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a high level of expertise and therefore pupils make good progress in the development of their academic and personal skills. Teachers nearly always share and display the intentions of the lesson for pupils to return to throughout the session. Pupils learn to use their key skills effectively because staff use lessons imaginatively. For example, pupils used their literacy skills really well when they edited their stories after an exciting drama session.

This developed their language skills effectively because the teacher used open-ended questioning really well. In one very good lesson, planning was exceptionally good and challenged pupils to evaluate their success against specified criteria. Positive feedback is used well to give pupils confidence. Each is treated as an individual and those that find learning more difficult are really well supported. Teachers explain clearly to pupils if they have met the intention of the lesson but they do not give pupils effective feedback on whether they have been successful in attaining their individual targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The rich and exciting variety of learning activities on offer mean pupils' time in the school is planned well to meet the full range of needs. A strong and successful focus is placed on developing pupils' basic skills. The school links areas of learning together extremely well so that pupils are developing several skills at one time. ICT is used well to support pupil's learning in many areas. For example, Year 1 pupils created wrapping paper successfully using repeating patterns and images. Visits, visitors and an exciting selection of clubs and sporting activities provide curriculum enrichment. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported. More able pupils' learning is extended well by specific activities. The curriculum for children in Reception Year is sound, but planning for the outside area does not always link well with classroom activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are highly committed to pupils' well-being. As a result, those who join the school during any year group settle very quickly into school life. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust. Health and safety are given high priority and are regularly checked so that pupils work in a safe and secure environment. Any pupil at risk or who finds learning more difficult is quickly identified and supported well. Individual educational plans have specific targets for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment is closely monitored and evaluated in many areas of learning from Year 1 to 4. Although pupils' progress is monitored in the Reception Year it is not recorded sufficiently. Therefore, teachers and senior leaders cannot easily identify a pupil's individual rate of progress through the year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership is good because of the very enthusiastic, astute and insightful headteacher. Her leadership ensures that the school is always exploring ways to make the school even better. A senior management team will be created in September when a senior teacher is in post. Pupils from all backgrounds are integrated well into the school and racial harmony is strong. Governance is good; governors monitor and challenge the school effectively. Staff and governors work together thoughtfully to evaluate provision and suggest areas for improvement. Self-evaluation is used effectively. The quality of teaching and provision is monitored and evaluated well. The school has highlighted that a few subject leaders are new to their role and are not yet monitoring pupils' standards and progress effectively across the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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.

Annex A

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	2
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

13 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kempston Rural Lower School, Kempston, MK43 8RH

Thank you for welcoming me into your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. You go to a good school, and these are some of the best things about your school:

- you really enjoy all the school activities
- you behave well and you are really kind to each other
- your headteacher has very good ideas about how to improve the school
- teaching is good and staff work hard to help you to make good progress
- teachers and staff care for you very well.

I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are:

- improving the rate at which you learn writing skills
- making sure that all teachers explain to you whether you have been successful and reached your individual targets
- improving planning of activities for the outside areas for the youngest pupils.

Keep working hard and enjoying the many things you do at Kempston Rural Lower School.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector