

# Laburnum Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109477
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	288392
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Ranger

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	162
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr C Graygoose
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Pibworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2001
<b>School address</b>	Laburnum Road Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 1HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01767 680691
<b>Fax number</b>	01767 680691

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving its local area. Almost all pupils come from White British families. They represent a very wide range of backgrounds and include pupils from three nearby Traveller sites. A higher than average number of pupils arrive or leave during the school year. In some year groups, this mobility is very significant, for example only a third of the current Year 4 pupils started at the school in Reception. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Laburnum Lower School is right in judging itself to be a good school. It has some important outstanding features and only a few areas for further improvement. The effective and dedicated leadership of the headteacher, who was new to the school at the time of its last inspection, has enabled the school to improve well and an energetic and competent staff team has been established. Parents' views of the school are much more positive than they were when the school was last inspected. A high proportion of pupils experience changes of school or difficult family circumstances. These children, along with their classmates, receive high quality care, guidance and support that is well tailored to individual needs. They respond extremely well and to the calm, positive ethos. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding.

Pupils of all ages achieve well because the teaching and the curriculum are good. Many start Nursery with standards that are much lower than those typically expected for three-year-olds. By the end of the Reception year, they often have not quite reached the levels expected nationally but they have been given a good start. When they leave at the end of Year 4, pupils come close to reaching average standards in their academic work. Importantly they have developed an interested and mature approach to learning, enjoying lessons and are keen to do their best. Most have sound literacy and numeracy skills, although their handwriting does not always do justice to the content of their written work or enable them to write at speed when necessary.

The school's successes of the past few years have resulted from good leadership and management. It is well placed to continue to improve and gives good value for money. The headteacher has established a good climate for teamwork that has enabled new teachers, sometimes starting their careers at this school, to flourish and take appropriate responsibilities. The recent decision to appoint a deputy headteacher has added depth and talent to the senior team. Governors provide active support and know the school well. There are clear plans for what the school wants to achieve next, although the main development planning document does not detail precisely enough how current initiatives are intended to benefit pupils. This means that the monitoring that takes place, for example during governors' visits, is not as clearly focused as it could be on the impact of any changes that are being made.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that initiatives for school improvement clearly identify how pupils will benefit from the planned actions, so that staff and governors can monitor their success more efficiently.
- Improve writing standards by ensuring pupils use a well formed and fluent style of handwriting more consistently.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress. The school tracks achievement closely to check that, whatever their capabilities or home backgrounds, pupils build systematically on their learning. This is equally the case for those who need extra help in class, for the pupils who are more independent learners, and for those such as the Traveller children whose circumstances change significantly from time to time.

The school's results in the Year 2 national assessments in recent years have risen steadily and last year were above the national average. The current Year 2 has a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs than usual. Overall attainment in this group is below average but represents good progress for their capabilities and compared with their starting points in Year 1. By Year 4, standards are a little below those seen nationally. Here again, the school is able to demonstrate that individuals have made good progress, in spite of so many of them experiencing at least one change of school or needing additional help with their work.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they have extremely good attitudes towards school. Older pupils often take the initiative in getting the classroom materials needed to progress effectively. Overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good although, culturally, pupils have rather limited experience of the richness of the ethnic diversity in modern Britain. Pupils know a great deal about what is healthy. For instance, they strongly support the school's physical education programme, attending its sports clubs in large numbers. In surveys and discussions they say they enjoy school enormously. Attendance is good and has climbed steadily over the past few years. Absence rates are average but include the figures for the Traveller children while they are out of school. Pupils are considerate towards each other, contributing well to a safe environment, and they know many ways of keeping themselves safe. Pupils offer much to the school and wider communities in terms of the many jobs that they carry out around the building, through their school council and initiatives such as charity work. Pupils' strong enterprise skills and social awareness mean that, alongside their sound academic skills, their development towards their future beyond school is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Typically, lessons are carefully and imaginatively planned. Teachers use resources, including electronic whiteboards, particularly effectively to capture pupils' interest and to stimulate learning. Often pupils are invited to use such equipment themselves, so they learn skills of oral presentation effectively. On-going assessment and marking are used effectively to set targets for pupils, and to adapt teaching to the needs of different ability groups. Teaching assistants contribute well to this process, often supporting pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities to good effect. Occasionally, teaching offers too much direction to pupils, rather than questioning them and ensuring that they think through answers for themselves.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and balances all the required subjects well. It is adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the most able. In the Nursery and Reception classes, all areas of learning are planned effectively, although a shortage of covered outdoor space adjoining the classrooms restricts the range of activities when the weather is bad. Because of local planning restrictions, the school has been unable to remedy this. Lunchtime and after-school activities, visits and visitors enhance what is taught very

strongly. For example, pupils have opportunities to play rounders and football, to use the computers and sing in a choir and the main after-school club makes a valuable daily contribution. Professional coaches and links with other schools are used well. The school benefits from having its own swimming pool. The impact of the school's encouragement of healthy and active lifestyles has been recognised in the recent acquisition of Healthy Schools award.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is tireless in its efforts to support pupils and their families. Almost unanimously, parents and children who offered their views to the inspection praised the quality of pastoral and academic care. The school is vigilant in its arrangements to safeguard pupils. It has extensive links with relevant professional organisations and pupils benefit from voluntary support too, such as that given by 'RSVP' - retired volunteers who help with activities such as reading practice. Good systems for giving feedback to pupils, such as marking and target-setting, are used in a consistent way across the school and serve to guide, support and involve pupils in their continuing academic and personal development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a school that is committed to continuous improvement. Since her appointment, the headteacher has appointed able staff and supported their professional development and training well. Both the staff and the governors have reached a stage where good policies and procedures have been agreed. They speak sensibly of the period of consolidation that is now needed to ensure that these have maximum impact on pupils. At the same time they are responding well to local and national initiatives for further improvement. The headteacher receives excellent support from her deputy who plays a lead role for the staff in areas such as early years' education and the management of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers' subject leadership roles are developing well and monitoring of standards, teaching and the curriculum takes place regularly and efficiently. Good use has been made in this direction of local authority advice through the Primary Leadership Programme. Governors carry out their duties well, although their visits to school focus mainly on individual subjects rather than combining these with a scrutiny of the main initiatives for action in other areas.

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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>	<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?	2
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	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

<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	2
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	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

<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.



## Annex A

**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	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

10 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Laburnum Lower School, Sandy, SG19 1HQ

This letter is to thank you all for your help when I visited your school with Mr Paull recently. You gave us a very friendly welcome. Talking to you told us a lot about your school and we were delighted to hear how much you like it. Attendance has improved a lot in your school and this means you make the most of all the enjoyable activities the adults offer you. We were very impressed with your behaviour and how well you concentrate on your lessons. You also take part really well in the sports and clubs which are helping you to be so healthy. I saw the children in the Nursery enjoying their healthy fruit snacks. They had great fun trying to eat the lovely tomatoes without the seeds squirting out!

You are doing well with your work and this is because you are taught well. You told us about your learning targets and how these help you to make progress. We like the ways your teachers mark your work and help you to know how you have got on.

Your school is already helping you to get better at writing. We think that you could help yourselves even more with this by trying your best with your handwriting. In this way, as you get older, you should be good at writing quickly and clearly in any subject.

Mrs Pibworth makes sure that all the adults who help to run your school do their jobs well. The staff and governors spend a lot of time making sure that your school is a good place for learning. We have asked them to keep checking that any changes they make really do help to make your time at Laburnum School even better.

Thank you again for making our visit so enjoyable.

Best wishes,

Mrs Helen Ranger Lead inspector