

Stanbridge Lower School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109482 |
| Local Authority | BEDFORDSHIRE |
| Inspection number | 288394 |
| Inspection date | 8 June 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Sheelagh Barnes |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 93 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Fiona Smith |
| Headteacher | Mrs Rosemary Waters |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 October 2001 |
| School address | Tilsworth Road Stanbridge Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 9HY |
| Telephone number | 01525 210328 |
| Fax number | 01525 211921 |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over one day.

Description of the school

Stanbridge Lower is smaller than most schools. Fewer pupils than nationally are eligible for free school meals and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average at around a quarter. In some classes it is much higher due to variations in class size. More than a third are from minority ethnic groups and these are mainly from Traveller communities based on four local sites. There is high pupil mobility as families move into and out of the area. Skill levels on entry to Reception cover the full range, but overall is at the expected levels for children's ages. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006. There have been changes to the way that Foundation Stage children start in school following Bedfordshire's review.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides a good and caring quality of education for all of the pupils that attend. It is led well and provides good value for money. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of standards and pupils' overall achievement. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Children get a sound start to their education in the Reception class (Foundation Stage) where the recent focus has been on developing early literacy skills in particular. The progress and achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, in the rest of the school is good overall. Standards are above average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 and 4, progress and achievement are good in English and, currently, progress and achievement in mathematics are satisfactory. Attendance is below average. A significant minority of parents expressed a concern that the behaviour of some children impeded the progress of others. Inspection evidence is that this is not the case. However, the regular absences of some pupils do affect their progress, although it does not affect the progress of others.

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour in school is good because what is expected is made very clear to all and pupils feel part of one community. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. It is particularly good for reading and writing. The school has focused on improving mathematics over the last year. While the teaching of mathematics is good in some lessons, it is generally satisfactory. This is because too little regular emphasis is placed upon using practical methods to develop pupils' confidence in understanding relationships between numbers and recognising number patterns. The curriculum is good overall. It is rich and varied and captures pupils' interest. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. This is largely due to the constraints of the building and the temporary arrangements of children being taught in the school hall, which is limiting practical activities. The school has identified this as an area for development with the completion of the current building works.

Care, guidance and support are good. The good pastoral care arising from the school's caring and inclusive ethos ensures that all children feel well looked after and have someone to go to if they have anxieties. They learn to be healthy and to stay safe. The caring ethos of the school is greatly appreciated by the children, who are proud of the way they all get on together and help those who sometimes miss school because they are travelling to settle back in quickly on their return.

Leadership and management are good. The school has a good capacity to improve. The headteacher has a very clear picture of the strengths of the school and the areas for improvement as a result of her rigorous monitoring and analysis of data. She provides good information to the governors, who are very supportive of the school. Governors have identified the need, however, to gain more confidence in analysis of data and monitoring of subjects to enhance the work they do in supporting the school still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more practical activities in mathematics throughout the school so that they have more confidence in the relationships between numbers.

- Ensure that activities for children in the Foundation Stage are more practical and focused more closely on the guidelines for Early Years Education and the specific needs of the individual children concerned.
- Work with families who take their children out of school during term time to encourage better attendance and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children settle well into the Reception class and make satisfactory gains in their learning overall. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 and pupils' achievement is good. Standards are generally above those expected for pupils' ages by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 and 4, progress and achievement in reading and writing continues to be better than expected. However, progress in mathematics is satisfactory, despite the focus the school has placed on this subject in the last academic year. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve in line with their peers. However, school tracking indicates that there are significant differences in the progress children of all ages make, proportional to their attendance. Those who attend more regularly make the best progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They are fully aware of how staff expect them to behave in school and what rewards and sanctions will result from their behaviour. As a consequence, behaviour is good and the children themselves say that there is no bad behaviour or bullying. They admit that they do fall out at times but also say they quickly make up again. They enjoy school and are attentive in lessons so that no time is lost in teachers gaining or maintaining discipline. Children enjoy good opportunities to learn about a range of cultures and religions through lessons and assemblies. They are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and those of others. Overall attendance is low because a third of the children come from families who sometimes move about the country and receive their schooling elsewhere for parts of each year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall. Relationships are good and teachers take good care to make lessons interesting and meaningful. Learning support assistants do a good job in supporting pupils who need extra help. Teaching in some subjects, such as reading and writing, is consistently good and leads to pupils making good gains in their learning and achieving well. Teaching in mathematics and for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. These two areas are identified as areas for focus in the school development plan. Assessment is good and has improved in recent years, having more rigour and accuracy. Marking is regular and pupils are all given specific targets to improve their work. The school is aware that this needs to be developed further as targets are infrequently referred to in teachers' marking and not all pupils confidently know what their targets are.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities to help children to learn. Through their work in science, physical education and personal, social and health education children learn to appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They also learn how to keep themselves safe from harm. Children are pleased with the good range of after school clubs on offer and with the way staff bring learning to life through visits out and visitors into school. For example, some of them enjoyed meeting people from the local community and learning about World War 2. Staff make good use of information and communication technology to aid learning in other subjects. For example, children used computers to write up history topic work and integrate pictures into their text. The range of activities for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, partly because of the constraints on opportunities for practical work imposed by the building. Throughout the school children's grasp of basic number facts is not as secure as it could be because staff do not give them enough practical activities and move them on too quickly to more formal, written mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All the required procedures for ensuring children's health and welfare are in place. New children settle in quickly to school routines and are well looked after by staff and other children. The staff maintain good links with parents and with outside agencies like the Traveller Support Unit and the educational welfare officer to ensure they are doing all they can to encourage children and their families to support what the school is doing. The children thoroughly enjoy the way staff recognise their achievements both in and beyond school and this encourages them to try hard in all that they do. The staff track how well children are doing in English, mathematics and science, which enables them to identify anyone who is falling behind and to put in place extra support. The systems for tracking how well children are doing in other subjects are not as systematic or consistent yet, though this is a priority in the school improvement plan.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed headteacher has a very clear view of the school based on rigorous and accurate monitoring. She ensures that this information is used effectively to highlight areas for improvement in the development plan. As a result there have been significant improvements, for example in standards in writing in the last year. Resources are deployed efficiently. The governing body are strong supporters of the school and know it well. They have identified the need to develop their skills in data analysis so that they can support and challenge with more rigour. All legal requirements are met and financial management is good. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its links with other agencies.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <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

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| 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? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Stanbridge Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9HY

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently and for being so polite and friendly. We really enjoyed meeting you all and talking to you.

What we liked most about your school.

- The teaching you receive is helping you to make good progress, especially in your reading and writing.
- Teachers set clear rules for you so that your behaviour and personal development are good. You play and work together very well.
- You learn to be healthy and take care of yourselves.
- You do a lot of interesting and exciting things in school and learn to think of others.
- There is a good range of other interesting activities such as your recent residential trip which I know you really enjoyed.
- Your headteacher works very hard and knows what to do to make your school even better.

The things we have asked your school to do next.

- To help you all to improve your mathematics by understanding more about numbers.
- For children in the Reception class to have more opportunities to work outside and to have lots more practical activities.
- For those of you who are often away from school and so sometimes miss lessons to make better progress.

We really enjoyed talking to you about your school and watching you learn and wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barnes and Mr Nelson