

Turvey Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109489
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288396
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox

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

Type of school	First
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Anderson
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Swidenbank
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002
School address	May Road Turvey Bedford MK43 8DY
Telephone number	01234881259
Fax number	

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The pupils in this small school come mainly from backgrounds with favourable socio-economic circumstances. No pupil has been identified as having learning difficulties or as being entitled to free school meals. There is a small proportion whose first language is not English but few are at the early stage of learning the language. There are about 10% more boys than girls. Many pupils do not start their school career at Turvey, and this is particularly evident in Key Stage 2. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is generally well above that expected nationally. When they start school, many children have already achieved the standards that are expected at the end of the Foundation Stage.

There has been a high staff turnover recently and two of the five classes are presently taught by temporary teachers. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, giving satisfactory value for money. It has the full support of the parents of its pupils, with one parent commenting, for example, that 'my daughter has really developed in confidence', and another writing that being at the school was 'a fantastic experience for my son.' Standards are well above average. From their advantageous starting points the pupils make sound progress and their achievement is satisfactory. The children in the Reception class build soundly on their significant skills and knowledge and enter Year 1 with attainment well above that expected for their age. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 are well above average and sometimes exceptionally high in English and mathematics. However, they are generally better in reading and writing than in mathematics. The few pupils whose first language is not English make similar progress to others and do well in acquiring competency in the language. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and sometimes good. Teaching is often lively and enthusiastic, involving pupils and encouraging them to learn. The tasks set for them, however, are not always set at the right level for their individual abilities. Consequently, pupils sometimes struggle with their work or find it too easy. The curriculum is satisfactory and there is a good range of activities outside the school day. However, there is an imbalance in the time allocated to different subjects and the skills developed in some subjects, for example in writing, are not sufficiently reinforced and built on in others.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Behaviour is good, and is sometimes outstanding when the lessons are stimulating. Attendance is satisfactory. Despite the school's best efforts, too many parents take their children on holiday during term time. The pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to lead a healthy life. They are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives because they build soundly on the very good academic and social skills they bring to school. In addition, they are confident and articulate individuals because the school takes extremely good care of their emotional and physical needs and gives them plenty of opportunities to take responsibility. The school has an effective tracking system which is used appropriately to identify those who are in danger of slipping behind and to put in further support. However, it has not yet done enough to encourage pupils to measure their own progress against their targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has a clear view of how the school should develop and has ensured that there is a positive and lively atmosphere of cooperation. Leadership and management at other levels are variable, but improving in some areas, as is evident in some of the work being done recently to raise standards in mathematics. However, the school's systems for checking the effectiveness of its own work, while adequate, are not rigorous enough to give an accurate view. Consequently, the school leadership has an over-optimistic view of how good provision is. Governance is unsatisfactory. In spite of the efforts of the chair of governors and the senior management, the business of the school is often delayed because too few governors attend meetings. Nevertheless, given the adequate development since the previous inspection and the satisfactory work being done to bring about improvements, the school shows a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that progress in mathematics is similar to that in English by ensuring that the tasks set for pupils are matched closely to their needs and that they are more involved in knowing what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that the methods the school uses to measure its own effectiveness are rigorous so that all areas where improvement is needed are identified and action taken to tackle them.
- Ensure that the governing body operates effectively and that all members take an active part in governance.
- Ensure that the curriculum is balanced so that skills in all subjects are built on and reinforced.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 as articulate, knowledgeable and confident learners. They continue to achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 to 4. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 are usually well above those expected. In 2004 they were exceptionally high in both years and this was also the case in Year 2 in 2005. Standards have been particularly high in reading. Achievement in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory in 2005 but not in 2006 when some made too little progress, particularly in mathematics. The pupils presently in Year 4 are on course to reach above average standards and have made satisfactory progress. Overall standards are affected significantly by the high turnover of pupils, particularly by the relatively large numbers who enter the school after Reception. Pupils of different ethnic groups make similar progress, as do boys and girls. The less able often make good progress, although the many very able pupils do not always do as well as they could.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are thoughtful and considerate, with a strong sense of right and wrong. There are good relationships between them and with adults. The oldest pupils look after the younger ones well, and all Year 4 pupils act as 'buddies' for those who have no-one to play with. In class, pupils are usually very attentive and concentrate well, persisting even when the work is difficult. Pupils enjoy school very much, although the more able sometimes say that they are not challenged enough. Most of the Reception children choose their activities sensibly and become totally involved in them, although a few are easily distracted. The oldest pupils occasionally lose concentration when the lesson fails to interest or challenge them. Due to the school's thorough focus on healthy lifestyles, pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community, and the school council members take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils have a good understanding of their own and other cultures, although their knowledge of life in a multicultural society is limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Because there are good relationships in all classrooms, most lessons move on smoothly. The best teaching is lively, using good resources to involve pupils and enliven the lesson. Teachers use questioning well to promote thinking and explore understanding, giving pupils opportunities to explain their thinking. Teachers have a general awareness of the levels of attainment in their classes but this is not sufficiently refined to ensure that work is set at the appropriate level for the range of abilities in the class. In many cases, teachers share the purposes of the lesson with their pupils and occasionally revisit these during the lesson, but this practice is not used consistently across the school. There was good use of an interactive whiteboard in one lesson but little other use of information and communication technology (ICT) was observed during the inspection. Marking is insufficiently precise. Although there are signs of a recent improvement in pupils' writing books, it does not show them well enough how they have achieved the purpose of the lesson or what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum generally meets the needs of most pupils at least satisfactorily. The school offers an excellent emphasis on healthy eating, which is promoted through such activities as focus weeks on foods from other countries, and which is also used to develop pupils' cultural knowledge. The good personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' personal development well. They particularly enjoy the good range of activities outside lessons. However, the curriculum lacks balance as considerable additional time is allocated to English, and too little to science and some other subjects in many classes. The length of the school week barely meets the recommended minimum and there is some slippage of time during the day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of provision is good. The school's pastoral care is exceptional and is much valued by parents and pupils. All necessary checks are carried out on adults who work in the school and risk assessments are in place. Pupils say that there is always an adult they can confide in if they are upset or need support. The school's effective tracking system is used appropriately to monitor pupils' progress and identify those who need further help. Pupils have individual targets, displayed in their books, but their knowledge of these is inconsistent. The targets are rarely referred to in lessons or in the marking of pupils' books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has promoted a sense of purpose and trust, so that all staff work well together and support each other. Through such methods as analysis of its performance data, there is an adequate general understanding of areas for improvement. However, there is insufficient use of other strategies, for example rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, to identify those aspects of practice that need to be developed to bring this improvement about. Planning for

school improvement is satisfactory, although it lacks some precision, particularly in showing how the effectiveness of the plan will be demonstrated. The chair of governors is involved satisfactorily in the direction of the school but receives too little support from the rest of the governing body. Too few governors take their role seriously or attend meetings regularly. The school works well with parents, although a few feel that their views and those of their children are not considered well enough.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	NA

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

14 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Turvey Lower School, Turvey, Bedfordshire, MK43 8DY

Thank you very much for your help when I visited your school last week. I really enjoyed meeting you and the discussions we had. You had lots of interesting things to say. I thought you'd like to know what I found out about your school.

You come into school with much better knowledge and skills than children usually do. You make satisfactory progress in your work, and when you leave your reading, writing and maths are better than most children your age, although your maths isn't as good as your English, so you could help by working harder on that. Your teachers set you targets to help you to see what you need to do. I've asked them to involve you more in setting those targets and deciding when you've met them. You do some interesting activities in class, but I think you spend a bit too long on some subjects like English and not enough on some others. Also, you don't do enough writing in other subjects.

I was impressed by the way that most of you behave and the way you live such healthy lives. The adults in your school take very good care of you and the older children look after the smallest children really well. The children on the school council are good at their jobs. You told me that you enjoy coming to school but your attendance would be better if some of you didn't go on holiday during school time.

These are the other things I think the school needs to do to improve.

- Use better methods to find out how well the school is working, so that your teachers really know what needs to be better.
- Make sure that all the school governors come to the meetings and get more involved in the school.

My best wishes for the future

Mrs Pat Cox

Inspector