

Lawnside Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109500
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288401
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Walker

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bernard Newman
Headteacher	Mrs Carla Goodall
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Lawnside Biggleswade Bedfordshire SG18 0LX
Telephone number	01767 312313
Fax number	01767 316802

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over two days.

Description of the school

Lawnside Lower School is average in size. It is situated in the Stratton district near the centre of Biggleswade. Although most pupils are from White British backgrounds, there is a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is also above the national average. The school is housed in a 1960s building surrounded by extensive grounds.

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 school has made a real effort to balance the aims of excellence and enjoyment for all children. The headteacher provides strong and energetic leadership so that there is a clear vision for improvement. The school is popular and parents speak highly of it. One parent wrote, 'The school is a caring and well managed environment in which our child has hours of fun whilst learning.'

Most children start school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below those expected for their age. They enter with particularly weak language, literacy and mathematical skills. Most pupils leave the school with at least average attainments, which represents good progress. The further development of pupils' writing skills is rightly a major area for development for the school. Personal development of the pupils is outstanding mainly because of the high quality of care and guidance they receive. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and act as good ambassadors for the school. Attendance and punctuality are extremely good. Pupils enjoy their time at school and develop into positive and friendly individuals. A particularly impressive feature of the school is the way that the older pupils support the younger pupils.

Pupils are well prepared for middle school education. There is good use of assessment information to track pupils' progress in order to identify underachievement. An experienced team of staff ensures that teaching and learning are good. The skilful management of pupils encourages positive attitudes and engagement in lessons. The curriculum is good with a wide variety of enrichment experiences. Theme days provide opportunities to integrate the subject areas and these are very popular with pupils. The provision in the Foundation Stage, although satisfactory, is not fully developed to meet the needs of all children.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and teachers are well supported by the governors who are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. The senior leadership team is not fully effective in supporting improvements in the school because their roles and responsibilities are not clear. The school greatly values the support staff although there is only a small number of teaching assistants. Self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher is well aware of areas for development. The school has made effective progress since the last inspection. Lawnside Lower School has good capacity to improve even further as it moves towards the next stage of its development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the speed and confidence with which pupils write so that they can record their thoughts and ideas with greater accuracy.
- Adapt the Foundation Stage provision to meet the needs of all children.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team so that it supports school improvement more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but many do not reach the standards expected by Year 1. In Year 2, standards are average in writing and mathematics and slightly below average in reading. Pupils make good progress because the school focuses on the development of the key skills. From Year 3, all groups of pupils make good progress so that

standards by the end of Year 4 in the optional tests are slightly above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. A major priority for the school is to improve pupils' writing skills so that they can record their thoughts and ideas more accurately. There are yearly variations in attainment and achievement between boys and girls.

Additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures that they make good progress. Pupils also make good progress in history and physical education where standards are above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. The school is a welcoming and safe environment in which pupils show respect towards each other and the staff. Behaviour is exceptionally good in and beyond the classroom and pupils display highly positive attitudes to learning and their school. They like working and playing together very much. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and take part in a wide range of sporting activities.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are sensitive towards the feelings of others, and appreciative of the world around them. There are very good opportunities for reflection and singing in assembly. They contribute to the community well and the school choir performs regularly for local groups and organisations. Pupils raise money for charities on non-uniform days. They appreciate the chance to share their ideas for improvement through the school council and were involved in the development of the fitness trail in the school grounds. Year 4 pupils value the opportunities to act as 'reading buddies' in order to support the younger pupils. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and attendance is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good rapport with pupils, ensuring success through enjoyment. Teaching is at its best when teachers share clear learning targets with pupils and planned activities meet their individual needs. Lessons are typically well taught. Searching questions challenge pupils' thinking and motivate them to succeed. Pupils make most progress during group activities, when teachers and support staff work very effectively as a team. History is taught particularly well because teachers bring the subject alive through themed project days that capture pupils' interest.

Teachers' expectations are sometimes not high enough and, occasionally, undemanding worksheet-based activities lack challenge and interest. In the Foundation Stage, although children make a sound start, there is not always the right balance of class, group and individual learning. Assessment and marking are generally good. The best practice recognises achievement and points the way forward. However, further work remains to be done to ensure greater consistency so that all pupils are aware of their targets and know how to improve their work. Systems for recording the provision for gifted and talented pupils are underdeveloped.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum that fully meets the needs of its pupils. Weaknesses found at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. There are good links between subjects and the school places appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

There is a well-structured programme for personal, social and health education. High quality initiatives such as involvement in the National School Sport programme promote involvement in physical activity. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support, enabling them to achieve well. The school makes very good use of its grounds to extend the curriculum through activities such as environmental science. There is a good range of extra curricular activities that successfully supports pupils' enjoyment at school. Regular visits and visitors extend learning effectively. The Foundation Stage curriculum, although satisfactory, sometimes lacks richness and variety.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school places pupils' welfare at the heart of all its work. Arrangements for child protection are very secure and fully meet government requirements. Pupils feel very confident that they can confide in a trusted adult. It is clear that rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour are effectively managed by the teachers. Playtimes are social occasions, with much laughter and fun. Older pupils care a great deal about younger ones and this successfully maintains the happy and harmonious atmosphere. The school has good links with The Lawns Early Excellence Centre and other outside agencies. Pupils in need of personal support receive excellent guidance, enabling them to take a full part in school life. Arrangements for tracking pupils' academic progress are good. Individual progress is monitored very closely so that underachievement is quickly identified. Current initiatives to involve pupils more in target setting are developing well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has encouraged a clear reflective vision for continuous improvement in the school. Parents, teachers and governors greatly respect and share her focused approach to promote high standards of behaviour and high levels of care and attainment for all pupils. The school is effective in identifying key areas for development and is accurate in its self-evaluation.

Staff are fully involved in discussing strategies for improvement and sharing the direction of the school. The school development plan is a good working document and subject plans are closely linked to whole school issues. The senior leadership team is dedicated and hardworking but their management roles are not sufficiently clearly defined. Subject coordinators provide satisfactory leadership and are beginning to develop their monitoring roles. The programme of lesson observations by senior staff is well developed but there are more opportunities for peer observations and sharing of good practice. The school is effective in recruiting staff and

there is a good programme of staff training. The school runs very smoothly and calmly on a day to day basis.

Governors are well informed of the school's progress and areas for development. They are very supportive of the headteacher and staff. They monitor progress well and make a significant contribution to the advancement of the school. The budget is well managed and the school provides good value for money.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	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.

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	3
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

23 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lawnside Lower School, Lawnside, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0LX

Thank you very much for looking after us so well on our recent visit to your school. We really enjoyed meeting you all and seeing you working and playing together. We enjoyed hearing you sing, 'Thank you for my Friends'. Here are some of the good things about your school.

- Your behaviour is outstanding - so well done!
- Everyone is helpful and feels part of a big, friendly family.
- Teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting.
- Teachers and staff care greatly for you.
- You treat each other well and look after the younger pupils.
- You try hard and make good progress.

These are the things we have asked the staff to do to make your school even better.

- Adapt some of the work for the Reception children to meet their needs.
- Help you to improve your writing skills.
- Make sure that the senior teachers have clear responsibilities.

Keep working hard and enjoying the many things you do at Lawnside Lower School. Thank you again for being so polite and helpful.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker Lead Inspector