



Clipstone Brook Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109521
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288412
Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007
Reporting inspector David Speakman

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

Type of school	First	School address	Brooklands Drive
School category	Community		Leighton Buzzard
Age range of pupils	4–9		Bedfordshire LU7 3PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525 376085
Number on roll (school)	181	Fax number	01525 217897
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Skingsely
		Headteacher	Mrs A Hardy
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school that serves the local area. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim a free school meal is below average. Almost all pupils are White British and a few come from a range of other ethnic minority backgrounds. A small number have English as an additional language and some are at the early stages of learning this language. About the same number come from a Traveller background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average as is the number with a statement of special educational need. A new headteacher took post at the beginning of the current academic year. The school gained Healthy School status last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection outcomes agree with the school that its effectiveness is satisfactory. The new headteacher has made a good start and, since her appointment at the beginning of the current academic year, there has been a significant improvement in many key areas of the school's work. The previous acting headteacher provided highly valued support and together they completed a full and thorough evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. These were prioritised into a good quality school improvement plan and the headteacher quickly set about securing improvement, building on existing strengths. A strong sense of team work was soon established. Two initiatives have been the formation of a new senior leadership team and the upgrading of the role of subject leaders. These areas are currently developing so the quality of the school's self-evaluation and its capacity to improve are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money. A significant amount of work has taken place to develop provision in the Foundation Stage of learning, which is satisfactory. However, activities are not sufficiently structured to ensure that all opportunities are used to promote effective learning, particularly in relation to communication skills and mathematical development. The quality and quantity of learning resources are satisfactory. The facilities are rightly being upgraded because they are not conducive to learning, particularly for outdoor activities.

From the time they join the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily. School assessment data shows that standards at the end of Year 4, are similar to those nationally expected for pupils of this age. Inspection findings confirm that through effective teaching in Year 4 attainment in literacy and numeracy are currently above age-related expectations. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but teaching seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. This is because teachers' expectations and the challenge they offer to pupils are inconsistent. The curriculum is satisfactory and its organisation means that the learning needs of pupils in mixed-age classes and in the setting arrangements are met satisfactorily.

Pupils receive good levels of care and guidance and the school works effectively with other schools and outside organisations to support them. As a result pupils' personal development is good. They show good attitudes to school and enjoy being there. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have a good awareness of keeping healthy through sensible eating and staying physically fit. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community and help make this a place where pupils feel safe. The school has good systems to monitor pupils' achievement as they move through the school. The setting of targets is in the early stages of development. At present targets are too general, broad and set over a long time span. Consequently pupils do not really understand the next steps in their learning or what they have to do to get to the next level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure rigorous monitoring of teaching to ensure that it is at least good in all classes so that pupils achieve well.
- Enhance provision in the Foundation Stage by improving resources and how they are used so that all activities are more structured to promote better learning.
- Improve the target setting process so that targets clearly identify small steps in learning, are appropriate and meaningful to the age of these pupils and inform pupils how well they are doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From an average starting point, pupils achieve satisfactorily and by the time they reach the end of Year 4 attainment is broadly in line with that nationally expected for pupils of this age. Children achieve satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage and most attain the goals nationally expected by the time they move into Year 1. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 are accurate and indicate that attainment is broadly average. Given their starting points all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make at least sound progress. As a result their achievement in reading, writing and in mathematics is satisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language soon learn enough English to enable them to progress at the same rate as other pupils. Records show that the achievement of the small number of pupils who do not attend regularly is poor. As a result of good quality teaching seen in literacy and numeracy lessons in Year 4, there are clear signs that attainment is improving and standards seen during the inspection were above those nationally expected for pupils of this age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development, particularly in terms of their multicultural awareness, is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. They enjoy lessons, pay good attention and are generally well-motivated to learn, showing good attitudes towards their work. Relationships between pupils are good and pupils keep themselves and each other safe. They are aware of how to stay healthy. They enthusiastically engage in the good opportunities for healthy eating and exercise, especially through sporting activities which promote well-being. Older pupils make a positive contribution to school life, for example being representatives on the school council or being involved in school assemblies. Life skills are developing appropriately to prepare them for the next stages in their education. Although the school has good procedures to encourage parents to send their children to school regularly, attendance is average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although teaching seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but opportunities to get the most out of tasks and activities are missed sometimes. As a result teaching and learning time is not always fully utilised. Throughout the school pupils are managed well and this helps create a calm and purposeful environment in lessons. In the lessons where pupils make the best progress, teachers ensure that there are always plenty of challenging activities planned for pupils of different ability, including extension work for able pupils, but this does not happen in all classes. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, varies. This is reflected in lesson planning. Marking is satisfactory. Some feedback to pupils through marking is really useful in helping them to understand how to move on to the next stage, but some feedback simply consists of supportive comments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which is well-enhanced with a good variety of clubs and other activities. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall but there is insufficient structure to some activities to ensure effective learning and resources are not always used well enough to promote good learning. In Years 1 to 4 the organisation of literacy and numeracy lessons takes account of the mixed ages in classes. There are good links with other community groups, such as 'Oscar's Club', located on the school site, which provides additional facilities and learning programmes for parents and their children. Local groups support sporting activities such as tag rugby. The pupils' personal and social skills are well-promoted within the curriculum through the good programme for personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a supportive community in which pupils are valued; as one parent commented, the school 'cares deeply for children'. The Rainbow Groups, a local authority support project for pupils in local schools, provides an effective means of developing confidence and self-esteem and helping those who find aspects of school life difficult to cope with. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning from the start and home visits are held before children first join the Nursery. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported satisfactorily and the school has established effective links with a range of outside agencies. Procedures for care and protection are secure and the school makes regular checks to ensure health and safety regulations are met fully. Pupils know what to do if they feel worried; they

are aware that they can speak with an adult if they have any concerns. Procedures for assessing pupil's attainment and achievement are effective, but some targets set for the next steps in learning are not detailed enough to support effective learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Since being appointed the headteacher has shown good leadership skills and has gained the confidence of the staff, governors, pupils and their parents. She has set a clear vision for the future of the school and there has already been improvement in important areas of its work. This is seen in the rising standards in Year 4 and the upturn in the quality of teaching. During this initial period the governors, particularly the vice-chair, have provided valued support to the headteacher. Governors' work and involvement in the school is good. Three teachers have been selected to make up a senior leadership team, to start their work at the beginning of the next term and the role of the subject leaders is being developed. The school's systems for checking the quality of its work are satisfactory but its performance is being evaluated with increasing rigour. There is a shared, unifying vision for bringing about needed change.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
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	3

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	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	3

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.

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	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

26 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Clipstone Brook Lower School, Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 3PG

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited you recently. We both enjoyed the two days we spent with you. Your school is changing quite a lot. You have a new headteacher and other staff are taking on new roles to help her run the school. There have been many changes and your headteacher has made sure that the school has coped well so that the teaching is sound and the quality of education is satisfactory. There is a lot of good feeling about the future of the school and you can help by continuing to cooperate with your teachers.

You are proud of your school and it is clear that you enjoy being there. You show a lot of respect and courtesy to teachers and visitors. We were impressed by the way in which you all get on well together and your behaviour in and around school is good. Those of you we spoke to said that you like the lessons because they are interesting. We found that you are making adequate progress in your work and that results at the end of Year 4 are at least at the level expected for your age. We did find that standards are getting better and that where the new headteacher has identified some weaknesses, and done something about them, there is improvement.

We found a few areas that we would like your teachers, other staff and the governors to look at and these include:

- making sure that all your lessons are as good as the very best ones so that you all achieve even better
- improving the resources and learning activities in the Nursery and Reception
- making your targets for improving your work easier for you to understand.

We wish you well in the future.

David Speakman

Lead Inspector