



Hockliffe Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109529
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288416
Inspection date 12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Raymond Jardine

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

Type of school	First	School address	Woburn Road
School category	Community		Hockliffe, Hockliffe
Age range of pupils	4-9		Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 9LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525 210330
Number on roll (school)	35	Fax number	01525 210330
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Valerie Stanbridge
		Headteacher	Mrs Sara Walden
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average and serves the village of Hockliffe and the surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and there are a small number of pupils who come from static Traveller families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is a little above average, as is the proportion that has special educational needs. Pupils' attainment on entry to reception varies but is typically a little below average, particularly in their language skills.

The school has achieved Investor in People Award, the Activemark 2006 award for its commitment to promoting sports and has International School status in recognition of its global links with children abroad.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hockliffe Lower is a good school that provides good value for money. The very encouraging environment for learning and the considerable attention given to each pupil's needs ensure that all progress well, both academically and in their personal development. Parents are very pleased with the school's work. One parent summed up the views of many when she wrote: 'Although the school is small, it offers activities associated with larger schools such as swimming, gymnastics and many other sports activities, and the teaching of languages and world issues. In short, it is a small school with a big outlook - and the kids love it'.

The staff work closely and successfully under the good leadership of the headteacher to provide a wide range of experiences that engage pupils' enthusiasm and broaden their horizons. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, behave well and take a full part in the rich variety of experiences, including many sports that the well-planned curriculum offers. Pupils learn how to stay safe and live healthy lives and most make good choices in what they eat. An outstanding feature is the extensive links with other schools and children across the world with whom pupils share their experiences by letter and e-mail. This, with the good range of visits and visitors, contributes greatly to their very good understanding and respect for a range of cultural traditions and to their good spiritual, social and moral development. The strong emphasis placed on children's social and emotional development in their Reception Year prepares them well for their next stage and they make good progress in this stimulating and well planned environment.

Teaching throughout the school is good. Teachers plan interesting lessons and use their assessments in a broad range of subjects effectively to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged in these mixed age classes. There are good standards of care. Pupils' academic and personal progress is carefully monitored and reviewed with them, particularly with those who have learning difficulties or disabilities, to ensure that a good pace to their learning is maintained. These regular checks on progress, together with supportive monitoring of the quality of teaching, are key reasons why pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points. Each year group is small, but the trend over time is for standards by Year 2 to be mainly a little above average. In Year 4, standards in 2006 were above the average of those in other schools in the local authority (LA), as was pupils' progress. Pupils achieved well in both reading and writing. However, mathematics was about average. Pupils have not been solving mathematical problems with sufficient confidence, a weakness the school is currently working to address, particularly in Years 3 and 4.

The school is well led and managed and has good potential to improve further. Self-review is broadly based, thorough and accurate. The school development plan has a host of actions, many of which are routine to the school's work. It does not focus sharply enough on the actions and success criteria relating to key priorities to enable governors and staff to monitor progress effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by placing more emphasis on applying mathematical skills to solve problems.
- Sharpen the focus on key priorities, success criteria and the actions needed to achieve them in the school's development plan so that the school improves at an even better rate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achievement by Year 4 is good, particularly in reading and writing. The small numbers of pupils taking teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 make comparisons with national averages in any one year unreliable. However, standards in Year 2 have been typically near to or above the national average for several years in reading, writing and mathematics. Children get off to a good start in their reception year. The curriculum is well planned and taught and the small numbers of children ensure that each receives a good measure of individual attention. They make good progress in all the areas of their learning and most achieve the expected standard by the end of reception. In later years, pupils also make good progress. Comparisons with local authority figures show that pupils in Year 4 made better progress and achieved standards above those of other schools in reading and writing in 2006. Standards and achievement in mathematics were broadly in line with other schools and are a focus for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and pupils from Traveller families are monitored closely and progress as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem and instilling respect for others and this encourages each to give of their best. Behaviour is good and pupils report that they feel secure and safe with very few incidents of bullying or harassment. They greatly enjoy the many opportunities for participating in sport and clubs provided by their school. Attendance is about average. Pupils readily take responsibility and learn to work collaboratively and independently. They show a very mature concern for others less fortunate than themselves. School council members, for example, have led efforts to raise considerable funds for children in Pakistan following the earthquake, and children in Africa. Visits such as that to a local Gurdwara (a Sikh temple) help prepare pupils very well for life in multi-cultural Britain. Pupils are also acquiring a good knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy from their personal, social and health education and through choices provided at meals. The good eating choices reflect well on their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons because they are doing things for themselves as they learn. Relationships are very good and the small class sizes ensure that each pupil receives a lot of individual attention so that difficulties are explored and resolved quickly. Consequently, lessons proceed at a good pace. Marking is regular, informative and helpful in providing pupils with correction and guidance. Teachers regularly assess pupils in a range of subject areas. Their good knowledge of each pupil guides their lesson planning effectively. Activities are appropriately challenging and pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils have helpful targets for their next steps which they use well to reflect on their own progress, especially in reading and writing. The focus on improving the teaching of writing in recent years has led to it becoming a relative strength but problem-solving in mathematics has not been emphasised enough, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Teaching methods are currently giving more attention to this aspect, although they have not yet made a full impact on standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is rich and varied with a good focus on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. It is planned effectively to meet the range of pupils' needs and abilities in these mixed age classes. Pupils learn to work independently which prepares them well for their future lives. The links with other schools, both locally and globally to enrich pupils' experiences is an outstanding feature. It develops pupils' understanding of other cultural traditions as well as raising their own standards. For example, pupils reflected on their spelling and presentation when they e-mailed friends in the USA and compared their handwriting with that of children in Pakistan. There are many clubs, visits and other additional activities provided with help from the village, including many sports that enable pupils to play a full part in the school and local community. Personal, social and health education is good. The school is currently introducing a programme of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) to further develop its provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good levels of care, guidance and support are provided. Systems for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are robust, including those for child-protection and ensuring the suitability of staff. Staff know each pupil very well. Pupils are assessed at an early stage, with expert help where necessary, to ensure that appropriate support is provided, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Detailed education plans guide the school's work for these pupils well. Support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good

and parents are kept well informed of their children's progress. Regular monitoring and reviews of every pupil's academic progress in a range of subjects ensures that potential underachievement is addressed promptly. There are good arrangements for children's induction to the reception class and smooth transition to middle school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The staff work well together to provide a good quality of education and care under the effective leadership of the headteacher. Self-review systems are well-established and include a thorough analysis of patterns in pupils' progress and comparisons with standards in other schools. Teaching is regularly monitored and good practice shared. Parents and pupils are also consulted, for example, through regular surveys, and their views acted upon. Consequently, the school's understanding of its strengths and weaknesses is soundly based. The school development plan is designed to be an extension of its self-evaluation report, but it unnecessarily contains many tasks that are routine to the school's work. Key priorities, such as improving mathematics, success criteria and actions to achieve them do not feature prominently enough within the plan to help focus the work of staff and governors sharply or to check progress.

Staff are outward looking and use their strong partnerships with other schools locally, as well as an innovative international dimension, to help broaden pupils' experiences and promote good standards. Leadership is shared throughout the staff and all are strongly committed to the school's success and improvement. Each takes on a range of responsibilities for aspects of the school's work and supports and guides others well. The chair of governors is thoroughly involved in helping to decide upon the school's direction. Governors manage finance and resources very carefully to promote good value for money.

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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?	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

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

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	1
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

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.

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	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

15 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Hockliffe Lower School, Woburn Road, Hockliffe, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9LL

Thank you for the warm welcome that I received when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed speaking with many of you in lessons and in discussions. You told me how much you enjoy school life because there are so many interesting things to do and you learn a lot at the same time. I also spoke with your teachers and a governor. The information you provided help to confirm what they were saying about your school. I was impressed with these aspects of your school:

- Your good understanding of how to live fit and healthy lives so that many of you are making good choices about what you eat.
- Your links with children in schools around the world. These are helping you gain a very good understanding of their ways of life and how you can help them.
- The good progress you make in lessons, especially in your reading and writing.
- Your good behaviour and the way you play and work so well together.

Yours is a good school as I am sure you know. You told me how much you like your teachers and the many sports and clubs that you take part in. You clearly enjoy working at the lively activities given to you in lessons. You know your targets for reading and writing and you told me how you use them to check how well you are doing - well done. Your teachers are currently working to make your mathematics even better. You can help them by trying very hard to solve mathematical problems so that you become very confident with them. The staff and governors are constantly trying to make the school better so I have asked Mrs Walden to concentrate on the most important areas to improve them quickly.

With all good wishes for your future at Hockliffe Lower School

Ray Jardine

Lead Inspector