



# Cranfield VC Lower School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109598  
**Local Authority** BEDFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288443  
**Inspection dates** 18–19 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** David Wynford-Jones

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Court Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Cranfield, Cranfield
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		Bedfordshire MK43 0DR
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 750261
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	294	<b>Fax number</b>	01234 752597
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jacqui Reeve
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Barbara Stubbings
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2003		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average. The socio economic circumstances are favourable. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge and understanding which are above those expected for children aged 4. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are below the national average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, a significant number of pupils arrive from different countries at various times during the school year because their parents are attending the postgraduate course at the local university. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who join or leave part way through the taught year is marginally above the national average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Cranfield Voluntary Controlled Lower School gives pupils a sound quality of education and satisfactory value for money. Pupils' personal development and well being is good. There is a very caring Christian ethos and all pupils are made welcome and are valued. Pupils want to come to school, they feel safe and secure. Most work hard; behave well in lessons and around the school. They learn to respect others and are developing a good understanding of healthy living. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school provides good care, support and guidance. However, the school's self-evaluation that it is good overall is not fully borne out by the inspection. Inspectors judged it to be satisfactory because pupils could make better progress and achieve higher standards by the time they leave the school. The school is improving in many aspects of its work.

The children settle quickly into school and are given a good start in the Reception classes. The curriculum is planned well and effective links are made between all areas of learning. Teaching is consistently of a sound standard and children are given the opportunity to develop their independence. By the start of Year 1 pupils have developed a thirst for learning. The vast majority make at least satisfactory progress. At the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently above average. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make the expected rate of progress in reading and writing but in mathematics, progress is not as good, particularly in Year 3. However, standards by the end of Year 4 are above national expectations. Reading is a strength within the school and many pupils achieve high standards. This is because teachers have helped pupils to become enthusiastic readers. The quality of pupils' writing is improving. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

Although there are many well taught lessons, teaching is not consistently good and so teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers manage the pupils well and relationships with pupils are good. Pupils learning English as an additional language are supported very well. They make good progress and engage in all aspects of school life. Teaching assistants provide effective support when working with individuals or small groups, particularly when working with pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. As a result most make satisfactory and some make good progress. The needs of the more able pupils are met satisfactorily.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has accurately identified areas for development but the success criteria in the school development plan are vague. Steps have been taken to bring about improvements, but these have not always been implemented with sufficient rigour. Consequently, rather limited progress has been made in tackling all the issues raised during the last inspection, for example, monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and improving teaching in Year 3. However, test and other data are now being used systematically to track the progress of pupils and adopt appropriate strategies if they are falling behind. These have not yet had an impact on pupils' learning. The curriculum is now good. It is supported well by a wide range of extra curricular activities, visits and visitors. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since

the last inspection and pupils are beginning to use computers to enhance their learning opportunities. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and great advocates for the work of the school. Many are new and are beginning to challenge the school. The school has satisfactory capacity to bring about improvements in its performance.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Quicken the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics, especially in Year 3.
- Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning.
- Adopt a more rigorous approach to the completion of the school development plan, paying specific attention to the criteria for success.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 4, pupils attain above average standards in reading and writing, but to a lesser extent in mathematics. This indicates satisfactory progress as the vast majority of children enter the reception classes with levels of attainment above those expected nationally. Pupils are satisfactorily developing their skills in the use of computers. Their achievement is broadly in line with expectations. In the 2006 Year 2 assessments, girls performed better than the boys but this is not the pattern in the school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language tend to make better progress than other groups.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils love coming to school. This is reflected in the above average attendance. The vast majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and work together well. Pupils say they are confident that if they share a problem with staff, action will be taken. Many older pupils demonstrate good levels of responsibility; for example, when acting as 'playground buddies', by putting out play equipment and helping others. Children in the reception classes learn to become independent, for example by registering themselves. The school council provides an effective voice for the pupils; members offer suggestions to improve school life and the school acts upon these. Council members are particularly proud of their achievement at a recent conference where they gave a presentation on their activities. Pupils also enjoy raising money for various charities. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and enjoy learning about cultures different from their own. They are well prepared for the next stage of education and later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the Reception classes teaching is good. Activities are planned well to ensure pupils make good progress. In Years 1, 2 and 4 there are good features, for example, the planning of lessons, the management of pupils, and teachers' subject knowledge. Good links are made to pupils' own experience, for instance in Year 2 where the birth of a baby sister was celebrated in a lesson about baptism in the Christian church. Teaching and learning in Year 3 are not as effective, especially in mathematics but the school is providing satisfactory additional support. In lessons where teaching is not as successful, the pace in some parts is too slow, learning outcomes are not clear and teachers do not always identify clearly the steps pupils need to take to improve. In Year 4, because teachers give pupils good opportunities to work independently, they make better progress and achievement is satisfactory. The school has recently put in place systems of assessment to enable teachers to identify pupils who are not making enough progress but this has yet to impact on standards.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is developing well. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' learning is enhanced by themed days, for instance for science, mathematics and history; visits from poets and theatre groups; and visits to places of interest, such as the museum at Verulamium. There is sound provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT these skills are being promoted satisfactorily through other subjects. Provision for pupils' personal development through the programme of personal, social and health education is good and so pupils understand effectively the importance of a healthy lifestyle and keeping safe. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility in the school community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The care, support and guidance offered to pupils are good. Staff know their pupils very well and are deeply committed to their well-being. As a result pupils feel very secure in the school. The school makes the necessary checks on those working with children, carries out risk assessments on any activities undertaken, and has good procedures for child protection. There are very good processes for welcoming pupils who are new to the school, including those who join mid term, for instance when a parent is starting a course at the nearby university. The school works well with parents and outside agencies. Provision and support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language is good. The recently introduced detailed records of pupils' academic progress are good, but this information

has not yet been analysed sufficiently to highlight what steps individual pupils need to take to improve. There are good examples of the marking of pupils' work but this is not consistent in all classes. Consequently, pupils do not always understand what they must do next to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school operates smoothly on a day to day basis. It is calm and well ordered. Reasonable progress has been made in tackling issues identified at the last inspection. Some weaknesses still remain in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and improving teaching in Year 3. There is further scope for developing the roles and responsibilities of subject coordinators so that the school can more accurately judge its own performance. The targets the school sets are based on the expected rate of progress. These could be more challenging to ensure pupils achieve the higher levels of which they are capable. The leadership team has been particularly successful in promoting a caring school that effectively includes pupils from all backgrounds.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

18 January 2007

Dear Pupils,

Cranfield V. C. Lower School, Court Road, Cranfield, Bedfordshire, MK43 0DR

Thank you very much for making me and my colleague so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our visit and talking with you. We thought that you were very friendly and polite. Your behaviour in class and in the playground was good. Looking at your books and talking with you about your school and your work helped us a lot in coming to our inspection findings. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and your attendance is good.

Your school is a satisfactory school and does a lot of things well. Your headteacher and teachers work hard to make certain that you are safe and well cared for. You have certainly learnt a lot about being healthy and found out about ways of life in other countries. The standards you reach in writing and mathematics are above average. They are high in reading. You have made a lot of improvements in your writing. Well done.

We also think that your school could do even more to help you. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you make even more progress in your work but especially in mathematics. We think that teachers can do this by checking carefully with each other that they are teaching as well as they can all the time. Teachers and governors can help each other to be very clear about what is expected when the school is planning to bring about improvements.

We are sure that if this happens you will enjoy school even more. Once again, thank you for making our visit so nice.

Best wishes to all the pupils at Cranfield Lower School.

David Wynford Jones

Lead Inspector