

Springfield Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109514
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	295366
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Brennan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	303
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Cherry Beale
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2006
School address	Orchard Street Kempston Bedford Bedfordshire MK42 7LJ
Telephone number	01234 306000
Fax number	01234 306001

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average lower school serves families in and around the Kempston area of Bedford. Children's skills and abilities on entry to school are typical for their age. Most pupils are of White British heritage and a significant number of pupils are of Indian heritage. In recent times a small but growing number of pupils join the school at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties or other disabilities. The school has Investors in People status and has received a Healthy Schools Award. There has been significant staff change since the last inspection a little over a year ago when the school was given a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school has improved well of late. The school accurately assessed its current effectiveness as satisfactory. It has responded effectively to major concerns raised in the last inspection. The headteacher and other key staff have worked well with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise pupils' achievement. A good sense of team work means that all staff are keen to play their part in continuing the school's improvement. The school has the backing of the vast majority of parents. Many staff are relatively new to their leadership roles and it is only in recent times that governors have become more vigilant in checking the school's progress. The school has strengthened the methods by which it evaluates itself and its capacity to improve is satisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

In response to satisfactory teaching and learning, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Standards are rising because more able pupils are doing better than in the recent past. Despite more rapid progress of late, standards remain broadly average. Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage sees children's education get off to a steady start. A good range of activities is provided for Reception children but teachers do not always ensure that children use these to good effect. Changes to the way reading, writing and mathematics are organised and taught are working well. Expectations have been raised and lessons are generally interesting. The curriculum is satisfactory but pupils do not put their new-found literacy and numeracy skills to good enough use in other subjects. Pupils acquire most of the skills needed for their future but a shortage of computers means that key computing skills are not developed quickly enough.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in and out of the classroom. Pupils understand and respect difference and get on well with each other. They eagerly take on responsibility. They exercise a strong voice in the school and know a good deal about how to improve their work. The latter is the result of improved assessment procedures which are used well to give pupils personal academic guidance. Pupils whose learning needs a boost are given suitable support and make steady progress. However, despite some strengths, care, support and guidance are only satisfactory because the school has yet to check on how different groups of pupils are doing. In particular too little has been done to check the learning of the increasing number of pupils joining the school at the early stages of learning English and to consider how best to meet their needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' access to computers.
- Make sure that there is a greater sense of purpose to child led learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Make better use of the curriculum to enable pupils to write creatively and apply their mathematical skills.
- Devise strategies to respond to the needs of the increasing number of pupils at the early stages of learning English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory but the rate at which pupils' progress has quickened lately. Standards are broadly average and the trend is upwards. Better teaching of literacy and numeracy has resulted in more rapid progress being made of late. More pupils than was previously the case go beyond expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who have learning difficulties or other disabilities make steady progress. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who are not at the early stages of speaking English achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils at the early stages of learning English benefit from some general support in lessons but too little is known of their performance over time. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. By the end of Reception most attain expected levels. Results in the national assessments at Year 2 rose sharply last year and were above average. However, this was in part due to a more able group. Standards in the current Year 2 are nearer the average mark as are standards in Year 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning; they play and work well together. Behaviour is good. Pupils show a good awareness of the importance of healthy living. Playtimes are active and pupils make good food choices at lunchtime. Pupils have a good idea about how to keep safe and know who to turn to should they have any worries. Pupils enjoy most lessons because the school has responded to their views about what makes learning fun. Attendance is broadly average and the school works hard at discouraging families from taking holidays during term time. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to exercise responsibility. Through the active and influential school council pupils have a strong say in the school and join with pupils from other schools in exchanging ideas. Strong international links enable pupils to develop a good understanding of a wide range of cultures. They gain an understanding of the differing cultures of their peers. This in turn promotes racial harmony in the school. This is indicative of pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, vigorous monitoring combined with appropriate staff training has led to an increase in the proportion of good teaching. Lessons are well planned and, in the main, address the range of needs and abilities within each class. As a result, more pupils are learning at a faster rate. Teachers effectively share with pupils lesson aims and the means for measuring success. This helps pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils receive good feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve and they regularly review their own progress. This increased involvement of pupils in their own learning and the good use made of interactive whiteboards to enliven learning has led to good levels of motivation amongst pupils. Some of the teaching, particularly in the Foundation Stage, remains only satisfactory. In these lessons, pupils are not given sufficient or appropriate guidance on what to do in group work or are left to their own devices too much when choosing activities for themselves. Consequently, time is wasted on unproductive activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage strikes a good balance between outside and inside learning but teacher-led activities have a greater sense of purpose than children-led activities. A reorganisation of the curriculum for literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Short bursts of time devoted to key literacy and numeracy skills are working well. However, the school is yet to harness the potential of subjects such as history and science for pupils to write creatively or to extend their mathematical skills. There are too few computers for pupils to use and this restricts the rate at which pupils acquire computing skills and the use to which they apply these skills. A thorough programme for pupils' personal development helps pupils to make the most of their time at school. There is a good range of additional activities, including specialist sport teaching, which do much to add to pupils' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has appropriate arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare and safety, including those for child protection. The positive relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel safe and secure. The school has improved its procedures for checking pupils' progress and generally uses this information well to set appropriate targets for pupils and to identify pupils who need extra help. The school works closely with a range of external agencies and parents to ensure that those pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive adequate support. It has also begun to improve provision for those who are gifted or talented. There has been a recent influx of pupils at an early stage of learning English but the school is yet to formulate particular strategies for fully supporting the needs of this growing group.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are sound. The school has responded with vigour and success to the serious shortcomings identified during the last inspection. A close partnership with the local authority has been used well to bring about a range of recent changes. New appointments have been made with an eye to plugging gaps in leadership and to strengthening teaching. Until recently the responsibility for improving the school rested too much with the headteacher. This is now changing. The role of the newly established senior leadership team has been clarified and it is beginning to take a lead. Some key subject leaders, especially for literacy and numeracy, lead their subjects well. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have begun to visit the school with a sense of intent and to hold it to account. Leaders have been helped by improved procedures for assessing the school's effectiveness so that leaders now have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff training is well directed and priorities for the future are pertinent and well planned. Monitoring of teaching is used to good effect in satisfying leaders that changes are having a beneficial effect on how pupils are doing. This is helped by the improved use of assessment information. However, systems are yet to be refined to enable leaders to track the progress of differing groups of pupils.

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Annex A

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?	3
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?	3

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	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

16 March 2007

Springfield Lower School, Orchard Street, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 7LJ

Dear Children

Thank you making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. I would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make your school the best it can be. You too play your part in this. You behave well and we could see that you were working hard. We were impressed by how many of you know your targets and think hard about your work. You have lots of ideas for making the school better still and it was good to see that the adults in the school take these on board. We could see how well you got on with each other no matter what your background. We saw how well the adults in the school take care of you and how much thought they put into making things right for you. We noticed that more and more children are joining your school who are just learning to speak English. We have asked the school to think about what it could do for these children that might help them make the most of their time at school. We also noticed that children in Reception work hard and have lots to do but we have asked the school to make sure that the children know exactly what they should be learning when they choose activities for themselves.

From visiting lessons and looking at your books we could see that you were doing well with your reading, writing and mathematics. It was good to see that teachers thought carefully about giving you work that was at the right level for you. We could see that lessons were made interesting for you by using interactive whiteboards. We did feel that you could be helped to make better use of what you have learnt in English and mathematics lessons when you are working in other subjects. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to try out imaginative writing in subjects like history and to practise your mathematics in subjects like science. We noticed that the computers in your classrooms were being used a lot. However, we don't think that there are enough computers to go around. We have asked the school to do something about this so that you can use computers more often.

Thank you once again for being so helpful. Good luck in the future.

John Brennan

Lead inspector