

# Gothic Mede Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109427
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	309979
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Jones

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bernard Griffiths
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jacqueline Bradford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 June 2005
<b>School address</b>	High Street Arlesey Bedfordshire SG15 6SL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462732002
<b>Fax number</b>	01462733249

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<b>Age group</b>	5–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Gothic Mede Lower School is situated in the small town of Arlesey in rural Bedfordshire. It is at the centre of the community and the vast majority of pupils come from within the town. The pupils transfer from the adjoining nursery school in the term following their fifth birthday. The school serves a wide ranging community with diverse needs, although attainment on entry is broadly average. Approximately 30% of children have special educational needs, which is above the national average. This figure has risen sharply over the past two years. Almost all pupils are of White British background and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The school has gained a Healthy Eating Award and the Sports Active Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that its overall effectiveness and progress made since the last inspection has been good. The school knows itself well. Effective leadership and management is at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher has her finger on the pulse of the school. Her careful monitoring of the school's performance and good systems for checking the achievement of pupils have led to the improved standards sustained over the last three years. For example, the school accurately identifies and prioritises the main areas for improvement into a well thought-out school development plan. Governors are making a good contribution to guiding the school and are challenging its work.

Pupils achieve well. Children get off to a successful start in the Foundation Stage. The school builds on this effectively so that the progress pupils make throughout the school is good and improving. Increasing proportions of pupils are reaching and exceeding the levels expected nationally in English, mathematics and science at Year 4. National test results for Year 2 pupils are above average. There is no significant difference in the progress made by pupils of different ability or background.

Because the school is very caring, pupils feel secure and valued. This has ensured their good personal development. Pupils appreciate the clear boundaries set and respond to the high expectations of them. Parents recognise the school's efforts and are very proud of the school. As one said, 'The school is wonderful....my child enjoys every aspect of school life, both academically and socially.' The quality of pastoral support given to pupils by staff and the good partnerships that the school has with outside agencies are significant strengths of the school because they enable pupils to deal with any worries, freeing them to learn. Good procedures ensure their safety and well-being. Pupils' academic guidance is good. Pupils are aware of the stages they have reached in their learning and know how to move forward. Thus, overall care, guidance and support are good.

The quality of teaching and learning is reflected in the good progress made by pupils. Planning, which underpins lessons, is detailed and explains the purpose of learning well. Teaching is effective and is characterised by tasks that closely meet pupils' learning needs. Lessons are engaging for pupils so that they want to work hard and do their best. There is scope to increase the opportunities offered to pupils to discuss and debate issues to develop even further their level of engagement in lessons. The curriculum is interesting and has an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy skills. The lack of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment limits the school in its ability to promote the use of ICT skills across the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Nevertheless, pupils are encouraged to learn and develop a real love for school. They particularly enjoy the out-of-hours activities that enable them to find new interests.

Inspection findings indicate that the school's commitment to raising standards and its effective self-evaluation strategies show a good capacity to improve. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The school currently has an unusual pattern of admission for children in the Foundation Stage. This year, no children have been admitted to the Reception class in the autumn term. However,

there are well advanced plans for spring and summer admission of children from the adjoining Nursery school in the term after their fifth birthday. Provision is good with an appropriate curriculum and resources to support learning. The Foundation Stage leader is experienced and well supported by the senior leadership team. The school is rightly keen to rationalise admission procedures to ensure all children are provided with the same opportunity as in other schools.

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their learning.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to take an even more active part in lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are consistently high because of the effective teaching and interesting curriculum offered to each pupil. The school has achieved high standards for the past three years. Inspection information indicates that children enter the Reception year with skills that are typical of five-year-olds. They continue to do well and, by the end of Key Stage 1, many exceed the expected levels in all areas of learning. This good achievement is built upon effectively and by the time pupils leave at Years 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are above national expectations. Staff set challenging targets and through skillfully taught lessons, pupils meet them. However, standards in ICT are no better than satisfactory because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practice and develop their skills in a wide enough range of tasks. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including pupils with statements of special educational need, make good progress. Boys and girls meet with similar success.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good because the school encourages them to grow in confidence and to believe that they can do well. Coupled with good academic progress this helps pupils prepare well for their future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behave sensibly and they make friends readily. They enjoy coming to school and several say there is little they would change. Attendance is above average. Staff help pupils develop an understanding of how to stay safe and to realise how their behaviour affects others, including in the busy school playground. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well through providing good quality healthy school lunches and an extensive programme of sports activities.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and local community and take part in activities, including the school choir, which enters festivals and entertains groups in the area. The school council helps to improve things in school including a recycling project. The school helps pupils prepare well for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They share the aims of lessons with the pupils whose progress accelerates when tasks are well matched to their needs and abilities. Lessons are often imaginatively and thoughtfully presented,

and this approach motivates pupils to learn. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and therefore extend their learning. Assessment is thorough and carefully tracks the progress of pupils. It is consistently used well in English and enables teachers to adjust planning for pupils of different abilities. Teachers and support staff use a good range of strategies to support learning. New skills and concepts are taught accurately and staff ensure there is the right balance of challenge and support. The diagnosis of the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Teaching assistants provide effective support to help these pupils meet their targets. At its best, teachers' marking is diligent and helpful to pupils because it explains how they can work towards their next targets, but this approach is not fully embedded in all subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good with a strong emphasis on the development of core skills in literacy and numeracy. Planning in these areas is good and includes some excellent examples of activities that have a real-life purpose. For instance, when finding out about capacity, the pupils learned to follow a recipe and measure ingredients accurately to produce a fruit cocktail which they then really enjoyed drinking. There is an extensive programme of activities that enrich learning including an impressive list of after-school clubs. There is a good programme of activities that help pupils' personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE). The staff have consulted parents well to ensure that the work, for instance on puberty, is appropriate and understood by all. The curriculum for ICT is satisfactory but the opportunities to embed the skills are limited by the relatively few computers available for regular use.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support of children is good with some excellent features. The school is a lead provider in a project to support the personal and social aspects of learning. There are planned 'circle time' discussions where children discuss their feelings and concerns. There are good links with external agencies that support families and children alike. The needs of children identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met, including effective support for those with hearing difficulties. There is rigorous monitoring of attendance and support is provided where necessary. There are also careful checks of those who help in school, and the recording of such information has recently been improved and now meets requirements. There are nurture groups which effectively support vulnerable children. Pupils identified as gifted and talented also receive suitable additional support.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has been the key figure in bringing about improvement to the school. She has established a good staff work ethic and ensured that pupils' progress has improved. She has been particularly well supported by the assistant headteacher in their determination to raise standards. The governing body is supportive of the school and effectively holds it to account for its performance. Governors are actively involved in planning the development of the school. Parents' views are regularly sought and their ideas are built into improvement planning. A good example of this has been the revision of the homework policy. Parents were

widely consulted and changes were made to reflect their views. Staff know the school's strengths and areas for future development well. They are enthusiastic and work effectively to bring about improvement. The school's self-evaluation procedures are thorough and accurate. With the evident good teamwork of staff and governors, the school is well placed to make further good improvement.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

5 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gothic Mede Lower School, Arlesey, Bedfordshire, SG15 6SL

Following our visit to your school we would like to tell you what we think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

There are lots of things that we like about your school. Some of them are:

- you achieve good standards
- you behave well and get on well with each other
- you learn a lot in lessons and make good progress because the teaching you receive is good
- the school is good at organising lots of interesting things for you to do
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after
- your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are very good at making sure that you get a good education

We agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this we think that the most important thing to do next is to make sure that you have more opportunities to use computers or other ICT equipment to help you learn in all subjects. We also think that you need even more opportunities to take an active part in your lessons.

We certainly enjoyed talking with you and finding out all about your school. Keep on working hard, doing your very best and enjoying your time at school.

Ian Jones

Lead inspector