

Goldington Green Lower School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109434 |
| Local Authority | BEDFORDSHIRE LA |
| Inspection number | 309981 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 October 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Nichola Perry |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 372 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Ian Hedley |
| Headteacher | Mrs Caroline Skingsley |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 June 2002 |
| School address | Goldington Road Bedford MK41 0DP |
| Telephone number | 08444 772448 |
| Fax number | 08444 772449 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Goldington Green Lower School is larger than most schools of its type. Although the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with small numbers from a range of minority ethnic groups, the proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is slightly higher than found nationally. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. An average proportion of pupils is identified as having learning and/or difficulties, but a higher than average percentage of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most pupils start at the school with knowledge and understanding below those expected nationally. The school has gained the Investors in People award and an International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher has a very clear sense of direction and has worked hard to recruit a committed senior leadership team. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the headteacher and governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing, not all senior staff share that clarity of vision. Some regard the recently introduced management systems themselves as evidence that the school is successful, rather than evaluating the impact of those systems on pupils' learning and achievement. The improvements made to procedures for checking the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning are too new to have had a significant impact on standards yet. The school provides satisfactory value for money and is soundly placed to improve further.

Achievement is satisfactory. Children make good progress in the Reception class, attaining standards in line with expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 2 when pupils reach broadly average standards. By the end of Year 4, standards are similar to those expected for their age, indicating satisfactory progress overall, although it has been better in English than in mathematics in recent years. The school has recognised and addressed this issue so that achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4.

The satisfactory curriculum provides a wide range of additional activities at lunchtime and after school that pupils thoroughly enjoy. Lots of visitors to the school, as well as visits in the local and wider communities, help pupils to develop an understanding about their role in society. Teaching and learning is sound overall. There is now a good emphasis on speaking and listening to develop pupils' language and its use. Teachers' planning usually says clearly what children are expected to learn though in some lessons too much time is taken making pupils copy these intentions into their book before the learning begins. In some classes, pupils are not well motivated because activities do not take sufficient account of the different ways in which they learn. This leads to some inattention that is not always managed effectively and slows the pace of learning.

Very good pastoral care of pupils ensures that their personal development is good overall. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living and a good awareness of the need to be safe. The active school council offers pupils good opportunities to share views and learn about democracy. Pupils are eager to support their school and the local community, and to take responsibility, for example, through being playground 'buddies' or librarians.

The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure. Robust systems for safeguarding them meet all requirements. Parents are very positive about the school and pleased with the level of care their children receive. Academic monitoring and guidance is satisfactory. Good systems have been introduced which ensure pupils are more involved in their own learning. However, these are fairly recent and still bedding in.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and contributes well to ensuring children develop good basic skills. The curriculum is planned effectively to cover all areas of learning, with opportunities to develop imaginative and structured play, including outdoor play. There is good emphasis on teaching language, communication, social and problem-solving skills. As a result, children achieve well and standards are in line with those expected by the time pupils enter

Year 1. Relationships are good and children settle happily and quickly. Parents are very pleased with what the school offers their children. The Foundation Stage leader has developed accurate assessment skills and good systems for tracking children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that classroom management and the tasks set for pupils are good enough to engage them consistently, to improve the pace of learning and raise standards.
- Equip the senior leadership team with the skills they need to evaluate accurately their impact on pupils' learning.
- Ensure that recently introduced improvements to procedures for checking the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team are refined and embedded thoroughly to maximise their impact on learning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pace of learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 where standards have been average for several years. Pupils have done better in mathematics than reading and writing at Key Stage 1, reaching above average standards in some years. Standards at Year 4 have been close to the levels expected at this age. However, in recent years progress at Key Stage 2 has been slow with a result that standards dipped to below expected levels. The school has worked hard to rectify this and current progress is satisfactory. Targets set for the next two years are not challenging enough to raise standards above these levels but the school is rightly in the process of revising them. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs progress at rates which are comparable with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupil's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils say they enjoy school, especially the visits to France and Hunstanton, and the after-school clubs. Their attendance is around the national average. Behaviour in the playground is good but in some lessons too many find it hard to concentrate and behave well, slowing their learning and that of others.

Pupils say there is no bullying but that if there were, the headteacher would take effective action. Consequently, they feel safe in school and playground incidents have reduced over the last two years. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, enjoying fruit for snacks and healthy school meals as well as physical education and sports activities. Many older pupils, for example, chose vegetable lasagne rather than sausages for lunch. Pupils sponsor a child in Uganda and recently enjoyed a visit from a choir from that country. This helps to improve their understanding of different cultures and increases their sense of responsibility for those less well off than they are. Their average skills in literacy and numeracy equip them satisfactorily for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Reception classes is consistently good and based on clear planning, appropriate activities, good support and a clear understanding of how young children learn. Teaching across the rest of the school is mixed but satisfactory overall. In the better lessons, pupils behave well and make good progress because relationships are strong and their work is challenging. Teachers are generally clear about what they want pupils to learn and share this with them. However, the pace of learning slows in some lessons as staff deal with minor behaviour issues. Too little time is given for pupils to practise their own writing. Pupils are increasingly involved in their own learning through opportunities to assess how well they think they are doing. There is good support for learning through effective use of interactive whiteboards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched well by themed weeks, visits and visitors. Strong emphasis on personal, social and health education and citizenship is matched well to the needs of pupils and makes a significant contribution to their personal development and well-being. Multicultural education is highly developed and the school has achieved an International School award. Residential visits enable pupils to develop their independence, and weeks focusing on health and safety raise pupils' awareness of the need to adopt safe practices. Where learning of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is woven closely throughout the curriculum, as in Year 4, provision is effective. This leads to pupils becoming more motivated to learn, for example in Year 1 through their work with the British Film Industry. However, these strategies are not consistent across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support is very good and pupils feel safe and well looked-after. Provision for the wide range of additional needs of many pupils and their families is very effective. The headteacher has set up a nurture group, led by a play leader, which has significantly improved pupils' behaviour. The play leader ensures that playtime activities are well organised and pupils know who they can go to for support. This has led to reduced incidents of poor behaviour on the playground. External agencies are used effectively to support pupils who require additional support. Good systems for safeguarding pupils' safety are in place and meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory. New tracking systems have been introduced and pupils are aware of their learning targets, although these are still new and their impact on pupils' learning has not been evaluated thoroughly yet. The new marking policy is appreciated by pupils in classes where teachers are using it regularly. However, it is not yet being used consistently, leaving some pupils unclear about next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Over the last two years the headteacher has been successful in developing a strong sense of teamwork. She has a real clarity of vision for the future, which has galvanised staff into a cohesive team with a common sense of purpose and commitment to improvement. There are structures and systems in place and clear priorities to check how well the school is doing so that self-evaluation of the headteacher and governors is accurate. However, although the foundations are in place, systems are still developing and have yet to provide more than early indications of significant improvements. Governors, many of whom are new to the role, are committed and supportive and offer increasing challenge to the school's work and performance. The headteacher has managed significant staffing changes effectively to ensure minimum disruption to pupils' learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and pleased with what the school offers their children and many made positive comments about the headteacher's leadership skills.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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

8 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Goldington Green Lower School, Bedford, MK41 0DP

We want to thank you for making our recent visit to your school so enjoyable. You made us feel very welcome and we can see why you like your school.

These are some of the things that your school does well.

- All staff care greatly for you so that you feel safe and secure in school and are happy to share any worries you may have with them.
- Teachers plan many visits, invite interesting visitors to talk to you and provide lots of after school activities which you really like.
- You learn lots about being healthy and many of you choose to eat healthy food at lunchtimes.
- You are taught how to care about each other and older pupils look after the younger ones really well.
- Teaching is well planned and most of you behave well, although not all of you listen to your teachers or each other all of the time.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to do three things to make your school even better.

- To ensure that all the activities planned for you in lessons are really enjoyable and make you want to listen and behave well, learn even more and improve your standards of work.
- Make sure that all the staff know how they can best help you to improve your work and make the school even better.
- To make sure that the new systems for checking your progress and how good lessons are help you to learn better.

Keep working hard and enjoy the many things you do at Goldington Green. We wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes.

Nichola Perry

Lead inspector