

Dunstable Ickniel Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109444
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	309984
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Lyddiard
Headteacher	Mrs Leonora Prewett
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Burr Street Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 3AG
Telephone number	01582 663709
Fax number	01582 670233

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school with pupils up to the end of Year 4. The vast majority of pupils have a White British background and live in generally advantaged social circumstances. The percentage of pupils' who have learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of need, is close to that normally seen. When they join the school, pupils' attainment is typical for their age. The school has gained several awards, including Effective Early Learning, Investors in Children, Healthy Schools accreditation and 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

'This is a good school where my children are happy, well looked after and achieve well'. Many parents echo this view and they are overwhelmingly supportive of the headteacher and staff. Pupils think that it is a good place to learn and enjoy being here.

The school is well led and managed by a team of dedicated staff who work together very well. There has been much success in maintaining above average standards over the years and in ensuring that pupils make good progress during their time in school. There are clear plans to improve further and issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively. The governors are fully supportive of the school and have a good understanding of where the strengths lie and what needs to be addressed. There is good capacity to improve further.

Pupils' personal development is very important to the school. Consequently their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and make a positive contribution to the community. Parents of pupils who moved into the area part-way through their education say that their children were made to feel welcome and settled very quickly.

Relationships throughout the school are very good and this makes a significant contribution to the progress that pupils make. All groups of pupils achieve well. Standards in national tests are above average at the end of Year 2. Good progress continues through Years 3 and 4 and at the end of Year 4 standards are above those expected for pupils for their age. This has been the general trend over the recent past and any dips in results are carefully analysed and effective strategies put in place to tackle the identified weaknesses. Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils know what they are going to learn. Tasks and activities are well planned and are matched well to the learning needs of pupils at all levels of ability. The curriculum is good and provides the pupils with many opportunities to learn outside of lessons and to learn basic skills well.

The staff take good care of the pupils. Every step is taken to ensure that the school is safe and welcoming. There has been a recent drive to improve the target setting process in the school and pupils now have individual targets for English and mathematics. Most of the pupils know what their targets are but do not always understand what it is they have to do in order to achieve them. There is some outstanding practice, where teachers refer to pupils' targets in lessons and encourage them to assess for themselves how well they have done, but this is not widespread throughout the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many parents comment on the good start their children make in the Foundation Stage. Several say that the emphasis on developing positive values in their children has resulted in them being keen to come to school and to learn. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because there is a wide range of interesting activities and staff have very good relationships with the children. Consequently, by the time that children transfer to Year 1, most meet and some exceed the standards expected of five-year-olds. Teaching is good and the interests of the children are taken into account when planning lessons. There is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children choose themselves. However, when

children pursue their own enquiries, for example using the interactive whiteboard, there is not always an adult on hand to support their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the best practice in teaching, so that pupils have a deeper understanding of their targets and how to be successful in achieving them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, whatever their age or ability, and generally reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Any slight variations in standards are carefully analysed by senior leaders, who take prompt action to remedy them. For example, the 2006 dip in reading standards was successfully tackled. As a result, standards in reading and in other core subjects were exceptionally high in 2007. By the end of Year 4 overall standards remain above those expected of nine-year-olds and standards in reading are particularly high. Pupils make good progress in building on existing knowledge and learning new skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because lessons are well planned and take account of their needs. Current standards throughout school are above average and the school's own accurate tracking data shows that almost all pupils are continuing to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is good and so they make effective progress in their learning and social development. They have positive attitudes to school and learning. One pupil shows this when he says, 'I like the hard work in literacy and times table challenges.' Such attitudes prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and for later life. The school is effective in promoting pupils' awareness of safe and healthy lifestyles. Daily ten minute exercise sessions for all classes develop positive attitudes to health and fitness, and playground friends help to keep break times safe. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils relate well to each other and show good consideration for others. They have a good level of knowledge and respect for different people's cultures and beliefs. They are enthusiastic about 'International Week' during which they learn effectively about many different countries and cultures. Pupils contribute to the wider community by raising money for many charities. Their attendance is satisfactory and the school is working well to improve this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The very good relationships that exist between adults and pupils have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers explain clearly the purpose of each lesson so that pupils know what they are going to learn. Marking in books is generally good with encouraging remarks as well as an indication of what pupils could do in order to improve their work. However, the quality of this aspect of teaching varies somewhat. There is some outstanding teaching in the school. Where this occurs teachers constantly refer to pupils targets and encourage them to check for themselves how well they have done. Most lessons move at a fast pace, with quick fire questions

that enthuse pupils to learn more. Pupils report that teachers make learning interesting and that they especially like lessons where they can investigate for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. It includes all National Curriculum subjects and an appropriate amount of time is given to each of them. There are many extra activities that make learning interesting for the pupils. Pupils appreciate special times, such as 'International Week' and enjoy all the activities provided. This particular week has a significant influence on pupils as they learn to respect the beliefs and customs of people from different backgrounds. Pupils think that their homework is great and particularly like using their big books. They comment favourably on all the sporting activities that are offered and enjoy taking part in these activities sponsored by the sports partnership. Whilst there are many sporting activities to encourage pupils to be healthy, there is little variation in the extra clubs that are provided for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff provide good pastoral care for all pupils. The systems for promoting pupils personal development and welfare are well established and, as a result, pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after. The school's procedures for checking the suitability of all adults who have contact with the pupils are exceptionally thorough and fully meet current requirements. All of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support, both in and out of lessons, to make sure that they make good progress. Teachers set targets for pupils in English and mathematics and pupils usually know what these are. However, there is too little guidance given in some lessons to help pupils reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an excellent leader and the senior leadership team is effective. Together, they set a clear direction for maintaining standards, which means the school has made good improvements since the last inspection. These include significant improvements in pupils' standards and achievement. The school met challenging targets for standards in national tests. Subject leaders' roles have been strengthened. This has created a tighter link between the quality of provision and pupils' results. Monitoring of the school's work is systematic and both strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified. Improvement planning is effective. Governance is good because training has been used well and they are effectively informed and hold the school to account for the standards reached. Governors and staff contribute successfully to high quality self-evaluation. Having identified that provision for gifted and talented pupils is not fully developed they are working to improve this area.

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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
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 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 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	3
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

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?	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

1 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Dunstable Icknield Lower School, Dunstable LU6 3AG

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school a few days ago and for telling us about your work. I am now writing to let you know what we found out.

You told us that yours is a good school and we agree with you. We were very impressed by the way you all worked hard and got along together. Your behaviour is good. We enjoyed hearing about your school and smiled when we heard that most of you like your homework. Not many children tell us that. We looked at your homework books and noticed that you have very interesting things to do.

You make good progress in your lessons and reach standards that are higher than usually seen. Most of you told us about your targets and we noticed that some of you referred to these in lessons. We have asked your teachers to make sure that all of you know how to achieve your targets by asking you to look at them regularly in lessons so that you can check for yourself how well you are doing.

We really like all the work you do for local and national charities. We know that you understand about keeping healthy and safe and that you have many opportunities to take part in a variety of sporting activities, which you enjoy.

Thank you once again for all your help and we wish you good luck in the future.

Marianne Harris

Lead inspector