

Flitwick Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109452
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	309987
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Foley
Headteacher	Mr Steve Morrow
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Temple Way Flitwick Bedfordshire MK45 1LU
Telephone number	01525 755444
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average lower school. Most pupils live in the town of Flitwick but some come from nearby villages. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage, with few pupils of minority ethnic heritage and none at early stages in acquiring English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than that in schools nationally. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a bit below average, whereas the number with a statement of special educational need is slightly above average. Attainment on entry is broadly average but there are far more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in some years than others. The school has Investor in People status, Activemark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools status and it is in the process of applying for Artsmark. An out-of-school club provides care for pupils before and after school and a pre-school will shortly move to accommodation on the school site.

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. The majority of parents are highly satisfied with its work and say, for instance, that 'Flitwick Lower School is a fantastic school that not only nurtures the child's education but also the social skills required to get on well in life'.

The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and has a very inclusive atmosphere where pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are welcomed and supported. The staff encourage pupils so that they grow in confidence and enjoy school. Pupils make good progress in their personal development, get on well together and say that they feel safe. There are many opportunities for them to take part in sport and physical activities and this ensures they develop a good awareness of healthy living. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and are eager to learn.

Pupils achieve well overall and reach standards that are above the national average. They make good, and at times outstanding, progress in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Although always at least satisfactory, progress is more variable in classes at Key Stage 2. Since the last inspection, standards have been above average in tests at the end of Key Stage 1, with instances of exceptional performance. Standards are also above average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4. Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Although aspects of teaching are good at Key Stage 2, work is not always matched to the prior attainment of different groups of pupils or additional challenge provided for the most able. Sometimes, teaching does not make clear to pupils how they might succeed in a given task or improve their work.

The school is led and managed well. It has made good improvement overall since the last inspection, is well placed to improve further and provides good value for money. Managers have been effective in sustaining above average standards overall and standards at Key Stage 1 rose to well above average in 2007. Managers have embraced various initiatives and used these effectively to refine the range of learning opportunities provided for pupils. Gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark and Healthy Schools status has led to improvements in the curriculum. Furthermore, the school has developed close links with external agencies to improve provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Managers are accurate in judging the school's overall effectiveness and use annual test results well to gauge the quality of education provided. However, information gained from monitoring and ongoing assessment is not analysed as rigorously as it should be to resolve inconsistencies in teaching.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school provides well for children in the Foundation Stage. In 2007, most children reached and some exceeded national expectations in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. An average number reached expectations in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. They did well in language and communication and in developing their early reading skills but less well in linking sounds and letters and in writing. Currently, children are making outstanding progress in mathematical development and good progress in other areas. Teaching is good overall and expectations in mathematical development are very high, questioning probing and tasks varied and motivating. Teaching assistants make

a very good contribution to children's learning and to the good care and support provided. Although targets are not formally identified for individuals or groups of children, the curriculum reflects national guidance for the Foundation Stage well. Classrooms are well resourced and children have access to a spacious outdoor area. The school has, rightly, identified the need to develop this area further. Parents are well informed and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 2 by matching work consistently to the needs of different groups of pupils, providing greater challenge for the most able and sharing with pupils more information about how to succeed.
- Sharpen self-evaluation by making more rigorous use of information from monitoring and data analysis to drive school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 have been above average in recent years in writing and in most years in reading and mathematics. Standards rose in 2007 to well above average overall and in writing and mathematics and above average in reading. Although girls reached higher standards than boys in all three subjects, the difference between the attainment of boys and girls was no greater than that found nationally. Pupils who left school in 2007 reached above average standards and made satisfactory progress during their time in Key Stage 2, with the best progress in writing and the weakest in mathematics. Their slower rate of progress is explained partly because a significant proportion of the year group had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has identified the need to raise achievement at Key Stage 2, and already put in place a number of changes to its curriculum. This has begun to bring about improvement in the progress pupils make in mathematics. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and say that this is because they 'feel safe and have fun'. Their eagerness to succeed and willingness to try hard is also underpinned by a great deal of parental support, which contributes to their positive attitudes to school. Pupils are friendly and polite, and they feel that they are treated fairly. Behaviour is good and attendance is above average. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, and involvement in activities such as 'lunchtime angels' contributes well to their self-awareness and consideration for others. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, the school council is active in putting forward ideas for school development and pupils contribute to activities in the local community. They develop good basic skills and a range of qualities that stand them in good stead for the future. However, they are not prepared as well as they could be for living in a culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, staff have good relationships with pupils, classrooms are well organised and behaviour is managed effectively. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and use questioning well to promote pupils' speaking skills. In addition, in some lessons in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1, varied and exciting activities make pupils think for themselves and quickly absorb new knowledge so that they make outstanding progress. The school has satisfactory assessment systems in place which ensure that teachers are aware of pupils' prior attainment and of the targets to which they are working. The progress of individual pupils is tracked effectively, and marking is encouraging and often informative. In some lessons, tasks are matched very well to the needs of different groups of pupils. This is not always the case at Key Stage 2, however, and more able pupils in particular are not always challenged enough. Furthermore, teachers do not consistently model skills, for example when setting a piece of written work, to make pupils aware of how to succeed. The individual education plans of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities include specific and measurable targets and clear support strategies that help them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school places appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology as well as broadening pupils' experiences, for example, by providing French lessons. It has significantly upgraded its computer equipment to better support learning across the curriculum, and is adapting planning at Key Stage 2 to enable work on basic skills to be matched more closely to pupils' needs. There is good provision for the arts, and the curriculum is enriched well by a good range of clubs and trips, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 4. Personal, social and health education helps pupils to learn about keeping safe and healthy and makes a good contribution to their overall development. The school has strong links with the community and with voluntary organisations and businesses, which contribute much to pupils' personal development and achievement. It also makes learning interesting through special events such as the Viking Day that took place during the inspection. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified but the school has not yet devised a programme of activities specifically for them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care and support for its pupils. Parents are confident that their children are secure and pupils say that they know where to turn if they need help. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well, for instance through the use of signing, and teaching assistants who contribute significantly to pupils' progress. The school has close links with external agencies, including speech and language therapists and a local Downs Syndrome support group. It also liaises very effectively with staff from the out-of-school club. Clear behaviour procedures are in place and the school is effective in promoting regular attendance. Systems for safeguarding pupils are securely in place and meet requirements, and any risks are quickly identified and tackled. Pupils receive effective personal guidance, so that

they know right from wrong and develop positive qualities. Academic guidance is satisfactory but not all pupils are clear about their targets or about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and governors share a strong desire to make the school as good as possible. Very good links exist with parents and outside agencies to support the school's work, and parents are strongly supportive of the school. Managers take their views into account, and the school is outward looking and very inclusive. An effective management structure is in place and the role of subject leaders has been developed significantly since the last inspection. Senior staff are realistic in evaluating the school's effectiveness. They analyse data thoroughly to identify how well pupils are doing and use the resulting information well to make necessary adjustments to the curriculum. However, they do not use what it reveals, or information gleaned from monitoring, as effectively as they could to improve the quality of teaching. Governors make a good contribution to the school's effectiveness. They are very supportive of the school, closely involved in its work and collect information for themselves to inform their decision making.

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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	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

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

18 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Flitwick Lower School, Flitwick, MK45 1LU

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and thanks especially to those of you who told us what it is like to be a pupil at Flitwick Lower School.

We agree with many of your parents who wrote to say how pleased they are with the school because this is a good school. The teachers and teaching assistants care well for you and help you to become confident. You get on well with one another, behave well and you are keen to learn. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe and know there is someone you can talk to if you are worried. We could see that you enjoy taking responsibility, like when some of you represent everyone's ideas as members of the school council. You told us that learning is fun and we could see how much those of you in Year 3 enjoyed the Viking Day that took place during the inspection. We really enjoyed seeing you dressed up in Viking costumes.

You are making good progress with your work and you reach higher standards than pupils do in many other schools. From when you join the school at the age of four until the end of Year 2, you do particularly well. You go on learning new things in Years 3 and 4, but you do not always learn as much then as you did lower down the school.

The headteacher, other teachers and governors manage the school well and they want to make it as good as possible for you. To help them do this, we have asked them to:

- make sure work is always matched to the next things you need to learn, and tell you how to succeed and what to do to improve your work
- make some changes to the way they check how well the school is doing.

You can help by always working hard and doing your best.

We hope you enjoy the rest of your time at the school.

With best wishes

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector