

St George's Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109467
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	309995
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Nash
Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Bullock
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	East Street Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 1EW
Telephone number	01525 372096
Fax number	01525 373152

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size first school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few are from minority ethnic groups. The knowledge that many children have when they start school is below the expectations for four year olds nationally. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who find learning more difficult is well above average. A small number of pupils is in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through the taught year is slightly above most primary schools. The school has the following awards: Healthy School, Activemark, The FA Charter Standard of Schools and Investors in People. An After School Club cares for children between the ages of four and nine years two days a week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. George's is a good lower school. The pupils get a good start to their education from Reception to Year 4. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds settle quickly into school life, whether they start in the Reception class or any other year group. Pupils achieve well and so standards are broadly in line with national expectations by Year 4. This happens because there is a good partnership in place between the staff, parents and other agencies. One parent summed it up when she said, 'I think St. George's is a great school for any child to get the education and support they need.' Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their child was safe and well cared for. The school works successfully to bring together the community. For example, sessions are run for parents to help them find out about ways to assist their children. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are incorporated thoughtfully into school life because of the school's massive commitment to breaking down any barriers to learning for all pupils.

All staff offer pupils a dedicated, good level of care, guidance and support. When asked to describe how staff care for them, one pupil said, 'brilliantly' and another said, 'they're super.' As a result, pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is a real strength of the school, mostly because it celebrates everyone's individuality with zest. Pupils work together in harmony and friendliness. They have positive attitudes to their learning. This is because of the ways that staff motivate them. They adopt healthy lifestyles effectively because the school encourages them to eat well and they learn to cook healthy meals. Pupils learn how to move around school safely and how to cross the road carefully. Pupils do not regularly discuss their successes in mathematics and literacy lessons because staff do not always set specific targets against which they can evaluate their work. This means they do not have a deep understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Pupils' enjoyment in many school activities is strong. This is mostly because of the wide variety of interesting activities planned by staff. The curriculum is well thought out and is enriched by many visitors who work with the pupils. They have good opportunities to develop their personal fitness, such as by learning salsa dancing. Teaching is good and so pupils make effective growth in their learning. Teachers make good use of practical teaching methods. Speaking and listening skills develop successfully but standards are below expectations because of the lower than expected starting point of pupils. Pupils' progress is not successfully tracked in this area of learning. Although they make satisfactory progress, writing standards by Year 4 are below expectations. The school appreciates it does not always share pupils' targets effectively in all classes and so they do not have a deep understanding of how to improve their writing.

Effective leadership and management mean the school has made considerable improvements since the last inspection. For example, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly. Subject leaders and governors monitor standards well. The school is in a good position to continue improving in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class but standards are slightly below expectations by the start of Year 1. Children develop their basic skills well because staff challenge them successfully and deepen their understanding. The teaching assistant is used well. This is especially

evident when she assesses pupils' attainment and records it on a clearly organised sheet. Occasionally, children do not understand how to improve their work because feedback from staff is not always specific. Children's personal development is good because staff care for them effectively. They learn to do things for themselves effectively due to the high expectations of staff. The leadership of this stage of education is good and pupils have rich opportunities to learn in the inside and outside areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils understand their personal targets more fully so that standards in writing are higher by Year 4.
- Track pupils' attainment and progress more effectively in speaking and listening skills so that standards rise.
- Develop literacy and mathematics lesson planning so that it meets the needs of all pupils and allows them to evaluate their successes more fully.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from Year 1 to Year 4. Those with additional learning needs make good progress because they have effective support from staff and the special needs support assistant. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well because teachers have high expectations of them. Those who speak English as an additional language are carefully assessed when they enter the school and they receive good support. In 2007, attainment was broadly average in Year 2 assessments and pupils' challenging targets were met. In the present Year 2, boys' and girls' standards are average except in reading, where they are above average. Although standards are broadly in line with expectations by Year 4, attainment in writing, speaking and listening is below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like coming to this school and there is a great spirit of enjoyment of learning. One pupil said, 'school is great fun.' The school council works effectively to improve the school for everyone. Pupils raise money for many charities and support the local community successfully. Although a few parents are worried about behaviour in the school, it is clear that the vast majority of pupils are well behaved. Behaviour is satisfactory overall because one or two pupils find it hard to control themselves. Attendance is satisfactory overall because a few pupils do not attend school regularly. However, the school works hard with the parents to reduce this and makes considerable efforts to encourage regular attendance and punctuality. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. They are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective and helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers use questioning thoughtfully and so pupils learn to think deeply for themselves. Good teaching methods develop pupils' basic skills. For example, Year 1 pupils learn about how to divide up numbers because ICT is used well to interest the class. Assessment activities are utilised mostly effectively to identify

those pupils who are underachieving. The use of skilled teaching assistants and teachers with small groups means pupils receive valuable extra attention. However, not all pupils are extended fully in lessons. This is because planning for literacy and mathematics sessions is not consistently challenging all pupils to use even higher levels of skill and to evaluate their own successes at the ends of sessions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is developing well. The provision for literacy and numeracy across the school is good overall. Pupils enjoy a good variety of physical education sessions, some of which are taught by specialist coaches, as part of the well-planned programme of study. This is because the subject leader works successfully to give this area of learning a high priority. Pupils have a good choice of extra activities, including sports and music. The curriculum is enriched well with many pupils taking part in a Christmas pantomime. ICT is used well to develop basic skills and enhance pupils' learning. The school is always looking for ways to improve. Further work is focusing on challenging gifted and talented pupils more successfully because this area is not fully developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff offer pupils a very committed and good level of welfare and care. This ensures that pupils develop into responsible and thoughtful young people. Pupils' behaviour is managed well. The pupils who arrive part way through the taught year are supported successfully and they achieve well. Pupils' attendance is monitored thoroughly by the school. They are encouraged successfully to lead safe lives, for example, through visits from the fire service. The school works carefully to safeguard pupils, and procedures meet requirements. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. A few pupils spoken to did not know how to improve their work in detail and said they did not often discuss their targets with staff. Occasionally, pupils' books do not record personal targets in a way that would allow them and staff to refer to them easily in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good quality of education is due to effective management. The headteacher and senior teacher lead the school successfully. An effective governing body works well with the staff to drive forward a vision of the school and its work with the community. School leaders use self-evaluation well and set challenging targets to improve standards. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that would benefit from further work. The system they have to check pupils' attainment has been improved since the last inspection but the proportions of pupils who make satisfactory progress or better are not recorded effectively in speaking and listening. This means that the school cannot easily celebrate success and record strategies to support those pupils who are underachieving.

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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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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

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

21 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St. George's Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 1EW.

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking with some of you. You are lucky to attend such a good, happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include:

- you make good progress in your work
- you concentrate well in lessons
- you really enjoy school
- your headteacher and senior teacher have good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting
- a super partnership is in place between the school and your parents
- staff care for you well.

I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make sure that you understand your personal targets so that your writing skills improve
- check your progress in learning to speak and listen more closely so that you improve them
- make sure that clearer targets for lessons are shared with you so that you can decide for yourselves if you have been successful in reaching them.

You can help by attending regularly and getting to school on time so that you are ready to learn, as many of you do. Keep enjoying all the things you are learning at St. George's Lower School.

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector