

Hazeldene Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109506
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	310010
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	378
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rob Baxter
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline McCafferty
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Stancliffe Road Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 9AT
Telephone number	01234 300100
Fax number	01234 300102

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2008
Inspection number	310010

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large lower school is located on the eastern side of Bedford. About half of the pupils come from within the vicinity of the school, which is mostly made up of private housing. The other half comes from further afield. More than three quarters of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The others represent a mix of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest being Asian. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportions that speak a first language other than English, and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are below average. Pupils typically enter the school at the standards expected and occasionally slightly above those expected for their age.

The school has recently gone through a period of several changes in leadership and staffing. As a result, the majority of staff, including the headteacher and some senior leaders, have only been appointed within the last two years.

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 effective leadership is leading to good outcomes for pupils. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and clarity of purpose, which is focused on raising achievement and ensuring pupils' well-being. In a short space of time, she has established a successful leadership team that has set up rigorous systems to improve standards and achievement, which are both good.

Although standards are above average, boys, and particularly those from minority ethnic backgrounds, were underperforming in the past. The leadership has been quick to identify this issue and the systems they have put in place have been very effective in accelerating these pupils' progress. Good attention to the staff's professional development has helped to significantly improve the quality of teaching to a good standard. As a result, pupils generally are making good, and for some, exceptional progress. Despite this, pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is a little slower than in other subjects. Another key development has been the introduction of rigorous systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Leaders are using this information to effectively identify and eradicate underachievement. Teachers are frequently using assessment information to plan appropriate ways for moving pupils on in their skills and understanding, but the use of this data is not consistent across the school.

The school promotes positive relationships through its clear expectations for and the consistency with which it manages behaviour across the school. Staff provide pupils with good care, guidance and support, which enables them to thrive socially, emotionally and academically. Consequently, their personal development and well-being, including their behaviour, attitudes to learning and spiritual development are good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

The curriculum is good and pupils are particularly motivated by, and enjoy the range of interesting clubs and other activities on offer. The curriculum enables pupils to develop successfully into mature and responsible citizens who make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. It also promotes pupils' excellent attitudes and habits in relation to healthy living.

Understandably, parents have found the previous instability in staffing to be unsettling. Most are happy about their children's experiences in school, and one parent wrote, 'Staff are dedicated, hardworking and go the extra mile to make school an interesting and fun place to be'. Nevertheless, a few parents have expressed concerns about communication and the number of temporary staff employed. The situation is now more stable and the school is looking to build on the existing positive relationships with parents. A few parents expressed concern about the role of teaching assistants, but the school's information about pupils' progress shows very clearly that they make an effective contribution to pupils' progress through the support they provide in class and the intervention programmes that they deliver.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's work and provide leaders with effective support and challenge. The significant improvement achieved by leaders in the past year demonstrates their good capacity to lead the school through the next phase of its development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good. Most children make good progress from their starting points and by the end of the Foundation Stage, many achieve standards that exceed the expected goals for their age. Staff have high expectations of children and provide them with interesting and challenging tasks. There is a good balance of activities to enable children to develop key skills and to explore learning independently. However, the role-play areas are rather dull and lack sufficient stimulus for good learning. By the end of the Reception year, children are articulate, with good social skills and a well-developed understanding of number. The new Foundation Stage leader has a good understanding of the strengths of the unit and the priorities for improvement. There are well-advanced plans to improve the outside area, particularly to provide some cover from the weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further accelerate pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that all staff use assessment data effectively to maximise pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their starting points, pupils make good progress overall. Standards are above average in all year groups, except Year 3, where they are average but where pupils' progress is still good. Pupils who, for identified reasons, find learning harder than others do well because they are supported effectively. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who underperformed last year are rapidly catching up with other pupils. Standards and progress are particularly good in reading, in which some year groups are making very fast progress. Pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is not quite as rapid as in other subjects. The 2008 national assessments at the end of Year 2 show that the gap between boys and girls is much narrower than in 2007. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the nationally expected standards also rose substantially in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and their attendance, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils of different cultural backgrounds get along together very well, which expands their understanding and respect for each other's heritages. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to live healthily and a good awareness of how to stay safe. Behaviour is good and pupils say that there is very little bullying. When it does occur, it is satisfactorily resolved, usually quickly. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school through a range of responsibilities and through the very influential school council, which plays a significant role in decision-making. School councillors have been involved in evaluating the school's proposals to improve the playground and thereby pupils' experiences during play. Pupils also support the wider community by raising money for charities. Their involvement in the 'young enterprise' scheme helps them to develop a good understanding of finance and the world of work. By the end of Year 4, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Classrooms are very attractive, calm and purposeful. Consequently, pupils are eager to learn and are very responsive to staff. Much of the teaching is good and some of it is exemplary. Most staff harness pupils' good attitudes by planning interesting activities that fully involve them in learning. They also use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to motivate pupils and to support teaching. Teachers are particularly good at using questions effectively to assess pupils' knowledge and extend understanding. The use of assessment information to plan appropriate activities is increasing in effectiveness, although not equally well in all classes. Teaching assistants provide pupils with good support, explaining ideas and ensuring that pupils' attention stays focused on learning, without impeding their independence. The incidence of good teaching is increasing well. Nevertheless, just occasionally, there is a lack of challenge in the activities provided and this reduces pupils' interest and slows progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum fully supports pupils' social and emotional development and promotes their literacy, numeracy and communication skills effectively. Plans are in place to make the links between subjects clearer by using themes to reinforce skills. The school is developing the use of writing and ICT across the curriculum. The school adapts the curriculum well to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils of different abilities, as well as groups such as boys. Learning experiences are greatly enhanced by visits and visiting specialists. For example, an artist in residence has inspired pupils to produce high quality artwork, which has also benefited their self-esteem. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is planned effectively and pupils learn to appreciate their place in the wider community. There is a broad and interesting range of extra-curricular opportunities, such as French, football, choir, recorders and art. These further support pupil's achievement and personal development and promote enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Positive relationships are very evident in the well-attended breakfast club, which provides pupils with a good start to the day. Good teamwork between senior staff, the learning mentor, teaching assistants and teachers ensures that there are effective methods to meet pupils' personal needs. Vulnerable pupils are identified, carefully monitored, and provided with appropriate support. This results in their increased confidence, self-esteem and positive attitudes. Most parents report that communication with them is good. Typically, one wrote, 'I feel happy going into school to put my views forward. It is an approachable and friendly school'. Pupils receive effective verbal guidance in lessons and are often involved in evaluating their own learning. However, while some marking of work is exemplary in telling pupils exactly what to do to improve, this practice is not consistent across the school. The school has appropriate procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders and governors evaluate the school realistically, identifying accurately what needs to be done next. Successful action is then taken to bring about improvement. The accelerating progress of boys and minority ethnic groups is an example of this good leadership. Monitoring systems are very thorough and these, together with good staff training, have been particularly effective in ensuring common approaches to teaching and learning. Consequently, the proportion of teaching that is good or better has significantly increased over the last year and inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Assessment information is more reliable. It is helping to ensure that teaching targets are more challenging in many classes, but not all to the same degree. Visits and reports from leaders and external consultants help governors to stay well-informed about the school's work. Consequently, they are able to make prudent decisions that assist the leaders in their work.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	1
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	1
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

25 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazeldene Lower School, Bedford, MK41 9AT

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed listening to your views and this letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

Your headteacher, all the staff and governors work hard to make sure that your school is a good one. Your attendance is good and you behave well. We were particularly impressed by your excellent knowledge of how to stay healthy and the outstanding contribution that you make to the school, particularly through the work of the school council. We also appreciated the high quality artwork that you produce. The teaching in your school is good and is helping you to learn quickly and achieve well. You told us you enjoy learning and the extra clubs and activities provided. You get along well with each other and learn a lot about people from different backgrounds. The adults look after you well and provide you with good support in your learning.

We also noticed that although you all do well in your work, the younger pupils do a little better in reading and mathematics than in writing, while the older ones do slightly better in English and science than in mathematics.

To help your school improve even further, we have suggested that the adults should:

- help the younger pupils learn faster in writing and the older ones to learn faster in mathematics
- ensure that all the adults use the information they gather about your work to help them plan the right activities for you, so that you can do even better.

We hope that you continue to work hard, particularly in writing and mathematics, and that your parents will continue to support all the staff in making your school a great place to be. We wish you all the best in the future.

Florence Olajide

Lead inspector