

Scott Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109512
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310012
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Penny Holden

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	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Dawn Herdman
Headteacher	Mrs Anita Barker
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Hawk Drive Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7JA
Telephone number	01234 352630
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Scott Lower School is a smaller than average school in a residential area of Bedford. There are many more boys than girls on roll. Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils are predominantly white British. A slightly larger than average proportion of pupils are learners of English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties is below average.

The headteacher has been in post since the start of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's overall effectiveness and the value for money that it provides are inadequate. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of School (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be expected to perform. The school is therefore, given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to improving the quality of teaching and leadership and management in order to improve the progress that pupils make.

Pupils' personal development and achievement are satisfactory. Overall, pupils achieve broadly average standards although for some this does not represent sufficient progress. This is because teaching is inadequate overall and because teachers do not monitor pupils' academic progress appropriately to intervene when needed. There is some very good teaching and pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. This is why, despite overall inadequate teaching, learning is more often satisfactory. The new headteacher has already begun to tackle the weaknesses in a determined fashion, and this is already impacting on the pupils. This is evident in the way pupils already know and abide by the new school rules. Pupils now understand what they are to learn in each lesson, and this is improving their learning. These improvements demonstrate that the school has the capacity to address the issues it faces. In the best lessons where teachers have planned work at different levels of difficulty, pupils make good progress but such planning is not prevalent across the school.

Children enjoy their experience at Scott Lower School. Many parents commented on how happy their children are at the school. One said, 'the school has really benefited my child. Staff, teachers and teaching assistants and reception are all very approachable.' Day-to-day routines are efficient and ensure that the school is a well-ordered place where behaviour is good. The basic curriculum is sound and provides a range of enrichments to pupils' learning through additional activities. Staff provide good levels of pastoral care and arrangements for pupils' welfare and safety are satisfactory. Over the last few years the school has started many new ideas and developments but these have not been consistently implemented or followed through. Too few staff take leadership roles and play their full part in the management of the school. Subject leadership is a weakness, except in literacy, and not all teachers take responsibility for following and supporting school policies and systems. This explains why there is a lack of consistency in implementing school policies and overall inadequate leadership and management.

Teaching assistants are a strength of the school and contribute considerably to pupils' experiences. They often work with the lower attaining groups and this is one of the reasons why pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities make better progress than some others.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The inside space is large and well organised. Resources and play equipment are appropriate for the age of the children. Activities that appeal are planned each day and children have a happy and settling introduction to school life. Staff have identified children's language skills on entry as an area for particular attention and toy mobile phones, telephones, phone directories and notepads are a popular activity to develop their communication skills. Teachers work well with individual children developing their writing and

number skills appropriately. Energetic physical activities and wheeled toys as well as some additional play activities are used outside although there is not yet a full outside classroom. The Foundation Stage environment is safe and functional but lacks the excitement and richness of many elsewhere.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by making more effective use of individual targets and information from checks on pupils' progress to plan lessons that will improve pupils' learning.
- Track and monitor more rigorously the progress of all pupils to ensure that support and interventions are timely and effective.
- Rigorously monitor the effectiveness of whole school management policies and systems, embed improvements and hold individuals to account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards by Year 4 are currently broadly average and, because pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning, the achievement of most is satisfactory. Pupils start school with broadly average standards on entry to Reception. The Foundation Stage gives pupils a sound start at the school. In non-statutory tests in 2006, Key Stage 2 pupils achieved above average standards in all subjects except mathematics which were average. However, in the most recent Key Stage 2 assessments in 2007, pupils achieved less well than in 2006. Girls do better than boys and in their Year 2 standard assessments, all the girls reached above the standard expected for their age. The school began to address the issue of boys' underachievement in writing last year but this has yet to have an impact on their standards. In Year 4, there was a mismatch between the expected and actual results. While identified groups progressed similarly, some individuals underachieved. Pupils who have learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because they are taught effectively in small groups. Pupils in the current Year 2 are progressing well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of learners are satisfactory. In the vast majority of occasions, pupils enjoy learning and readily take part in lessons. Pupils are adopting increasingly healthy and active lifestyles. They participate well during their two hours of physical education (PE) each week and Year 4 pupils are enthusiastic about swimming during the summer term. Younger pupils enjoy their daily fruit and vegetables.

Children behave well and take a pride in being helpful and taking care of one another and in helping adults. Consequently, they feel safe and are sure they would be protected from bullying if it occurred. Racist incidents, usually name-calling, are rare but are adults respond appropriately. Attendance figures match the national average and pupils are punctual and happy to come to school. The school council is newly elected and very keen to contribute to the life of the school. Last year's council took part in the selection of the new headteacher. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community, for example, through traditional activities such as carol singing in an old people's home and donations at harvest festivals. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their basic skills indicate that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their school career.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall although learning is often better than teaching because pupils' attitudes are good and they work with diligence and interest. Although there is too much inadequate teaching, there is also some consistently good teaching, and non-teaching staff contribute a great deal to making some pupils' learning effective.

Relationships between pupils and teaching staff are generally good and often warm. Teaching assistants are particularly successful when they work with teachers who plan their involvement and identify what they will teach and who they will work with. However, some teachers do not plan adequately, partly because their systems for monitoring the curriculum and for checking pupils' progress are weak. Consequently, the progression in pupils' learning is not secure and tasks are often not matched to pupils' prior attainments. There are early signs that teaching is beginning to improve; teachers now share with pupils what they are going to learn and check how well they have done at the end of lessons. In the best practice, work is marked against these learning objectives, pupils know what they need to do to improve and this develops their understanding; however, this is not consistent or embedded across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils have access to all the areas of the National Curriculum. Literacy and numeracy have an appropriately strong focus. New and interesting literacy tasks help teachers' planning and learning. Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the curriculum contributes satisfactorily to their learning. Carefully chosen topics help pupils learn how to be safe. The school site is large and has enormous potential for exciting curriculum developments. Pupils are helped to develop healthy lifestyles because they have easy access to physical activity, inside and out. Since the last inspection, there have been more opportunities to enrich the curriculum and thus develop pupils' enjoyment and achievement. These include a range of additional activities such as world book day, visits from theatre groups and public service workers such as fire fighters. There are also after-school activities and clubs, although these are provided by outside bodies at a cost to parents. Extended school provision, 'Scotties', is a much-valued resource adding to pupils' opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, but the different elements included in this area provide a very mixed picture. Pastoral care and support for pupils is good. The good number of very effective support staff contribute significantly to this. Adults take great care to keep pupils safe and happy. Formal safeguarding procedures, including child protection and risk assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Staff throughout the school support and look after the well-being of the pupils appropriately. The school office provides a very effective and friendly link between the school and parents, many of whom mentioned this feature as a strength. However, aspects of academic monitoring, guidance and support that pupils receive for their learning are underdeveloped. Teachers do not use effectively, the systems to monitor and track each child's achievement. This means that their progress towards any targets cannot be accurately assessed and interventions cannot be made sufficiently early to make a difference.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management have been ineffective in raising achievement and supporting learners. The new headteacher has made a good start. Important steps have been taken in recent days but there has been too little time for the impact of this to be seen in standards.

The leadership of the school has changed over the last few years and combined with staff turbulence and difficulties, has led to many initiatives being started but few being followed through consistently. Too few staff take leadership roles, some subject leaders are not effective enough in raising standards and staff are not applying policies and practices consistently. The new headteacher has made a perceptive and accurate analysis of the school's needs. She has begun to put in place the systems the school needs in order to make best use of the talents of both children and teachers. Quite rightly, her priority is on raising standards. Changes already begun include improved monitoring to ensure that agreed policies and practices are followed universally. For example, teachers now display and share learning objectives with pupils in lessons. As a result the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has improved their understanding of the issues faced by the school and has challenged robustly barriers to progress for some children. The governing body is committed to working to raising standards and have programmed more frequent twice-termly meeting to monitor progress in school priorities.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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?	4
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?	3

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Scott Lower School, Bedford MK41 7JA.

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly. I enjoyed talking to you all. The school council gave me a good idea of the responsible way they want to support the school and give you all an even more enjoyable time.

I saw how happy you are in school and how well you behave. All the adults in school make sure you are safe and learning to be sensible and thoughtful people. Your parents are pleased you go to the school and that you work hard. You love your lessons; some said they especially like art and making things. You want to please your teachers and do well with your work. You have a lovely, large school and outside area which gives plenty of room for interesting activities.

Scott Lower is a very happy and sociable place but there are some important improvements needed to make it a really great school. Although some of you do well in your work I think you can do even better. I have asked teachers to give you targets, small steps, to achieve in each piece of work and then to give you a clear idea of what you can do next time to improve further. You can play your part by working towards these targets and acting on the advice the teachers give you.

I have also asked the school to keep track of how well you are doing throughout the whole time you are at Scott Lower so that they can make sure you get all the help you should to achieve as much as you can. Do not be surprised if they ask you to do some extra hard work.

Your new headteacher and the other adults are going to work together to make sure that all classes follow the same rules and routines. Inspectors will visit the school again in the not too distant future to find out how well these changes are progressing.

Best wishes

Penny Holden

Lead inspector