

# Heathwood Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109513
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310013
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Jones

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	123
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Copeland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Barbara Hutchinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 December 2002
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Heath Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 3AU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01525 377096
<b>Fax number</b>	01525 382620

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<b>Age group</b>	4–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized lower school of 123 pupils. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of a Reception class that most children attend on a part-time basis, becoming full-time in January. Nearly all pupils are White British and all speak English as their first language. The school has additional provision catering for seven pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is well above average. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is below average. The school has achieved the International Schools, Activemark and Artsmark awards. The school runs a breakfast club and an independently run pre-school operates from the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Heathwood Lower School provides its pupils with a good education. Some aspects of its work are exemplary. These include provision in the EYFS and elements of pupils' personal development, such as pupils' enjoyment of learning and their contribution to the school and wider community. The very large majority of parents who made their views known were very positive about the outcomes achieved by their children.

Pupils enter the school with standards in line with those expected. They make good progress and, by the time they leave school at Year 4, overall attainment is above average. This overall picture does, however, mask differences between the performance in different subjects. Pupils make very good progress in their reading, with high standards consistently achieved across the school. Standards of writing have also improved following a determined drive, and the school rightly recognises the need to embed the improvements recently made. Mathematics standards are also improving following a dip in 2007 and although progress is good overall, some more able pupils are not achieving as well as they could.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their attitudes to school and the manner in which they approach and enjoy lessons is of a high standard. They listen well, take pride and responsibility in their work and engage well with their peers. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils are a significant feature of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall, although pupils' understanding of life in a multi-cultural society is rather limited. Pupils receive good pastoral and academic support. Issues of health and safety are dealt with effectively. This promotes confidence and security in pupils and greatly supports them in their work. Pupils' progress is tracked accurately and frequent reviews of learning targets ensure that pupils generally receive a good level of challenge. Marking is clear and rewards effort, but does not consistently provide pupils with good guidance on how to improve and reach targets.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Learning is supported by secure assessment information that is used effectively by teachers, resulting in a good match of tasks to the learning needs of most pupils. In mathematics, the occasional lack of challenge or recognition of pupils' capabilities limits progress. Nonetheless, in most lessons, pupils are engaged and challenged and this successfully supports their progress. Support for less able pupils, including those who receive additional help from the speech and language provision, is effective and hence they make good progress from their relatively low starting points. The curriculum is planned and taught in such a way that an appropriate priority is given to developing pupils' basic skills while providing effectively for their differing needs and interests.

Leadership and management are good. The school's strengths and weaknesses are clearly recognised and understood, leading to effective and appropriate priorities for improvement. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The headteacher, with excellent support from governors, has tackled the school's weaknesses with determination and skill. Consequently, the significant investment in enriching the curriculum and tackling aspects of under-achievement are resulting in improved pupil outcomes.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

On entry to the EYFS, children's levels of skills and knowledge are typically in line with age-related expectations, though they vary from year to year. Children develop their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills very well. They make excellent progress towards the learning goals expected because the teaching they receive is outstanding and the quality of care and support is highly effective. Most children reach the standards expected of five-year-olds in all areas of learning and some exceed them. Children thoroughly enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities. The staff are very good at helping the children to develop early reading, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills. However, they do not do enough to encourage children to reflect on their own learning. Excellent assessments of children's progress, performance and welfare are maintained and these help to inform parents how well their children are doing. The EYFS provision is exceptionally well managed.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress for more able pupils in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of life in multi-cultural Britain.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Attainment at Key Stage 1 is above average, despite a larger than average proportion of pupils needing additional support with their learning. Standards are highest in reading, where there has been an increase in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels. The school has recognised the need to raise standards of writing. Consequently it has successfully put into place a range of initiatives, including improving the quality and consistency of teaching and rearranging the timetable to allow more frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. The majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress and achieve their targets.

The current Year 4 pupils are on track to achieve above average results by the time they leave the school. Pupils make good progress, particularly given the large proportion needing additional support. As in Key Stage 1, progress is strongest in reading. Progress in writing has improved and is now good. This improvement is the result of successful intensive efforts that included investment in staff training and modifications to the curriculum. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in writing and mathematics have risen significantly. The rate of progress for pupils in mathematics is good overall. It has improved from the previous year, although progress for some higher achieving pupils remains satisfactory. With these improvements, the proportion of pupils who meet their targets is increasing.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils make a very strong contribution to school life. They demonstrate maturity and responsibility towards their work and each other. Many pupils speak and listen well, offering thoughtful contributions in lessons because they listen attentively. Effective relationships and good behaviour are much in evidence, both in lessons and around the school, though a very small number require some additional support in order to behave well in lessons. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to talk about its engagement with the local community. They

willingly take responsibility in a wide range of ways, including acting as playground buddies, fair trade councillors and the school nutrition action group. The school council also makes a significant contribution by representing the views of all pupils. Pupils benefit from knowing their opinions are valued and acted upon and their representatives can point to a range of initiatives which have resulted from their constructive suggestions.

Pupils say they feel safe and well supported. They are very aware of the needs of others, regularly demonstrating consideration and understanding. Pupils have a good knowledge of the factors which contribute to a healthy lifestyle and this is reflected in their choice of meals at lunchtime and their eating fruit during break. When learning new skills they display a good commitment to working together and this prepares them well for their future lives. Attendance rates are above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although pupils' understanding of faith and cultural diversity is not well developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning have improved significantly in response to the development work undertaken by the headteacher. Effective use of assessment information ensures that, in most cases, work is matched to pupils' needs well. Only for the most able, and in mathematics, are tasks not always selected to provide sufficient challenge. Good questioning techniques enable pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do. Teachers interact effectively with pupils to support their learning. Written feedback in pupils' books is good, with clear and definitive comments about how well pupils have achieved. Written guidance for pupils on how to improve further is, however, less consistent, although there are some examples of good practice upon which the school can build. In a few lessons, pupils lack opportunities to demonstrate independence in their work or to take responsibility. This means that these pupils are not able to show initiative or to apply their own ideas when undertaking tasks. Input from teaching assistants is mostly good, but their time is not always used as effectively as it should be. Hence, some pupils do not receive the timely and focused support that they need.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is appropriately matched to the needs, aspirations and capabilities of pupils. Much has been introduced in recent years to improve and extend opportunities for pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and many activities enable these to be practised in other curriculum subjects. Pupils' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills have recently improved and are at least satisfactory. This is a consequence of the increased provision of laptops and other hardware and the stronger links forged with other subjects. The school provides a wide range of activities within and beyond the statutory curriculum, including residential visits and a wide programme of visitors. Pupils benefit from pursuing particular themes through creative weeks, such as the recent 'Africa Week', and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. These are appreciated by pupils and strengthen their enjoyment of school. The curriculum is used effectively to promote pupils' personal, social and health education.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The school places high priority on the care and welfare of pupils. All responsibilities with respect to safeguarding pupils are securely in place and are reviewed regularly. Staff demonstrate a high standard of care and concern for pupils and provide a secure basis from which they can pursue their studies. The school works effectively with other partners, including a range of services designed to support pupils who need additional support or those who find learning more difficult. The school has extensive procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers monitor pupils' progress regularly and this information enables them to intervene where under-achievement is identified. Pupils have an increasingly secure knowledge of their targets but are not always clear about how to meet them.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have established high expectations and a secure focus on raising standards as the core of the school's work. This is securely underpinned by the good pastoral and growing academic support for pupils. Through strong leadership the headteacher has gained the trust and confidence of the school community. She works effectively with subject coordinators who demonstrate a growing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Sound investment in training and new resources has led to improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum, and has provided the basis for higher standards and improved achievement.

Governors demonstrate excellence in their support and challenge to the school. Their monitoring systems are robust and they have insightful knowledge of the school's performance and an equally clear view of where improvement is required. The school expends significant energy in working with the local community and providing experiences for pupils of the wider world. Hence, its overall contribution to community cohesion is good. The substantial investment made to improve the school environment since the previous inspection and the acquisition of important learning resources demonstrates that spending decisions have been carefully aligned to school improvement priorities. The school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heathwood Lower School, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3AU

Thank you for making me so welcome, talking to me and helping me during the school's inspection. It was most enjoyable coming to meet you and finding out all about your school. You will be pleased to know that the school is doing a good job - well done!

Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- You work hard in lessons and your achievement as you move through the school is good. This helps you to reach above average standards.
- Your personal development is good. You clearly enjoy your time in school and I was impressed by your good behaviour.
- You have good work planned for you and your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting.
- You told me that your teachers and teaching assistants are doing a good job and learning is lots of fun - I agree with you.
- Your headteacher and governors do a tremendous job of helping everyone work together to make the school as good as it is.

To improve further the school needs to make sure that the higher achievers do even better in mathematics. I have also asked your teachers to help you understand more about the cultural and religious differences of people living in Britain. You can help by working hard and doing your very best.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Ian Jones

Lead inspector