

# Southcott Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109523
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310015
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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

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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	270
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Frank Reedy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gill Ellyard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Bideford Green Linslade Leighton Buzzard LU7 2UA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01525 375753
<b>Fax number</b>	01525 371642

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Children enter the school with knowledge and skills broadly similar to children nationally. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the percentage of children with statements of special educational need. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the percentage of those with English as an additional language. The children come from socially mixed but relatively advantaged backgrounds. The school has gained national accreditations for its international dimension, health initiatives and physical education. It has also been awarded Investors in Children for its work with Early Years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Almost all parents who responded with comments attached to the inspection questionnaire share this judgement. From, 'My daughter positively skips to school...' to '...a happy, caring environment which encourages participation and learning in a creative and welcoming way'... parents echoed each other's impressions of the school with a high degree of consistency. They wrote about: the caring nature of the school; the high levels of commitment by staff; enthusiastic teaching; happy children; approachability and openness; and the very positive leadership of the headteacher. Pupils judge it a 'great school' too.

Staff work extremely hard to create a warm, secure, happy ethos in which young children flourish as individuals. This is achieved because of the excellent relationships that adults have with the pupils. They model courtesy and politeness, and foster pupils' self-esteem and self-control through appropriate praise and encouragement. The result is that pupils' behaviour is excellent whilst they retain a lively enthusiasm for everything the school has to offer. Pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils enjoy school and learn a very great deal because it is made fun and exciting by outstanding teaching and an extremely rich curriculum. Because of these factors, and the very high degree of care and support that they receive over their time in school, pupils achieve extremely well and reach exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4. The school tracks the academic progress of all pupils extremely carefully, sets itself demanding targets and has high aspirations for the pupils. There is excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

This is all achieved because of the school's outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is supported extremely well by the school's senior leadership team. The headteacher has high expectations of both staff and pupils. She has created extremely strong teamwork, shared values and a professional culture amongst all staff so that they think carefully about what they are doing and how it might improve. This is because the school is rich in assessment and other data that is very carefully evaluated. Staff have strong respect for each other's professional skills and support each other extremely well. The headteacher is skilled in fostering and developing individuals' leadership skills. The school's self-evaluation is extremely accurate. The school has improved very significantly since the last inspection and it demonstrates excellent capacity for ongoing improvement. The judgement of outstanding will not act as a cap to this school's further improvement because it has an ongoing commitment to refining pupils' learning experiences. The school has identified its immediate priorities as part of that process. One of these aspects is to re-look at how staff might make more use of assessment to foster learning. Pupils in some classes do not have individual targets, which limits their capacity to work out independently how they can improve their work.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children get a flying start to their education. In 2007, overall achievement was exceptional, with aspects of their development such as their behaviour and attitudes, language and literacy, and aspects of number being particularly high. In recent years, children's achievement has been good. As part of the process of gaining national accreditation for its work, the staff in Early Years have further developed the facility's overall effectiveness. This has led to even further improvement in children's achievement to its current very high level. Teaching is high quality;

there is very strong teamwork amongst adults. Children have a rich range of learning experiences within an extremely well planned vibrant curriculum and there is very high quality care and support. Children show very good independent working skills and enthusiastic enjoyment of learning and new experiences. They retain a sense of wide-eyed enjoyment as they, for example, roll out their gingerbread pastry. Children focus on their chosen activity with concentration and there is a calm working atmosphere. The leadership of the unit is outstanding. It is very reflective and focused sharply on ensuring children get the best out of their time in school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide pupils with individual targets in all classes so that they know more clearly how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards at the end of Year 4 in 2007 were exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. Well over half the pupils gained Level 4 or higher in reading and well over a third gained this higher than expected level in writing and mathematics. Standards in other subjects are above average. Standards of work and school data show that current Year 4 classes are on target to reach these exceptionally high standards again. Over their time in school pupils achieve extremely well.

Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were well above average overall and exceptionally high in writing. The proportion gaining the higher than expected Level 3 was well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 2 this year are similar. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make extremely good progress towards their targets. Higher attaining pupils also achieve extremely well. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is very small but they, too, are making extremely good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are confident, happy and enjoy school a very great deal. Consequently, attendance is high. Pupils say that children are kind and generous to one another. Pupils have an extremely good idea of what they need to do to look after themselves, by 'eating lots of fruit and vegetables'. They also understand the importance of exercise and of staying safe. They make an excellent contribution to the school community through the school council and as playground 'friends', as well as performing the many other classroom roles and responsibilities. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, not only by the development of their academic skills and careful induction but also because they have very well developed social skills and maturity. The school takes its responsibilities as being a largely mono-cultural school within a diverse society very seriously. Pupils respond with a high degree of tolerance and respect for all.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality. Lessons are lively, exciting and vigorous experiences, for both teachers and pupils. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, use clear

learning objectives and provide interesting and varied activities for pupils. They work at a very good pace and use humour to ensure that pupils enjoy lessons, behave well, take pride in their work and make excellent progress. One pupil said, 'Teachers trick you into learning by making it such fun!' Teachers have high expectations of pupils and involve them in their learning with demanding questioning. Work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and they are encouraged to work independently. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) extensively and this helps pupils, especially boys, focus and concentrate well. Teaching assistants very effectively support learning, because they are highly skilled and work closely with teachers to plan work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an outstandingly rich, interesting and stimulating curriculum. Provision for English, mathematics, science and ICT is excellent, as it is for music and French. The programme for personal, health, social and citizenship education is very well planned and organised and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Special events, such as Arts Week, give pupils excellent opportunities to extend their self-awareness and improve their skills. Provision for more able pupils as well as for pupils with learning difficulties is extremely good. An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities enhances the curriculum. Pupils' participation in these activities is very high. Pupils have very good opportunities to contribute to the wider community through, for example, participation in music and sports events, and international e-mail links.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Staff take great pleasure in fostering pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous and risk assessments are in place. The school tracks all pupils' academic progress extremely well through careful assessments. This allows high quality support to be put in place early. There are excellent links with specialist agencies through a regular multi-agency meeting. These links provide the school with specific support strategies for individual pupils.

Helpful marking ensures pupils know what they have to do to improve. Teachers set pupils clear and challenging targets, which they know and understand. These targets are tailored to groups in some classes rather than to specific pupils, so are less effective in helping pupils independently work out how they can improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

School management is excellent because adults' roles, responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined. As a result, individual efforts mesh extremely well, which means that the school is extremely well organised and resourced and runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Support staff have considerable financial, ICT and other expertise so that administration is highly effective. Teachers are accountable for pupils' progress through the demanding targets they have to meet, but this expectation is coupled with a mutually supportive culture to help achieve them. The school provides excellent value for money. Governance is excellent. Governors are

very supportive of the school and bring a range of personal expertise. They are a very strong and effective corporate body providing clarity of strategic direction and preparedness to challenge and question the school's leadership.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Southcott Lower School, Linslade, Bedfordshire LU7 2UA

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. My particular thanks to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to talk to us. What you had to say was extremely helpful. I thought I would share our findings with you.

We agree entirely with the Year 4 pupil who said, 'This is a great school.' Indeed we thought that this is an outstanding school. There are lots of reasons why the school is so good. Chief among them is what you do to make it 'great'. We thought your behaviour was excellent and you are clearly very kind and generous towards each other. As a result, you all seem to feel extremely safe in school and very happy. You clearly enjoy learning in a very enthusiastic way. We also thought that you take your responsibilities such as school council activities very seriously. What gives the school its special feel of warmth is the fact that everyone is so friendly - adults are kind to each other too.

I'm not surprised that you enjoy school and learning so much. Teachers work very hard to make lessons extremely interesting. We agreed totally with the pupil who said, 'Teachers trick you into learning by making it such fun!' A very cunning plan because standards are exceptionally high by the end of Year 4 and you all achieve extremely well. You also do such an amazing number of things. French, story weeks, trips out, e-mailing other pupils all over the world are really exciting stuff. However, we also understand that all this is only possible through extremely careful planning by the adults. They work exceptionally hard on your behalf. They are led extremely well by the Headteacher. She and the other staff constantly think about how to improve things in the school and make things even better! One area we asked her to look at is how all staff might set you individual targets so that you know how to improve your work even more!

Sincere good wishes to you all in your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector