

# Lark Rise Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109528
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310016
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Godfrey Bancroft

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Collette Emburey and Mrs Gloria Wills-Eversley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Attard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Cartmel Drive Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 3PT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582607852
<b>Fax number</b>	01582664293

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: attainment on entry; achievement and standards; pupils' knowledge of their progress and how to improve their work. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, sampling of pupils' work, assessment and target setting information, extensive portfolios of the work of the school and discussions with pupils, key members of staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as detailed in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This school is average in size. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, although the percentage known to be entitled to a free school meal is below average. Children begin school with standards that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. The percentage of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, and of these, very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. However, the percentage with statements of special educational need is higher than usually found.

The school has the following awards -

- Active Mark and Sportsmark
- Basic Skills Quality Mark
- Effective Early Learning
- Healthy Schools Award
- Investors in People (Champion organisation)
- International Schools Award
- National Lead School for Sustainability
- NAACE - ICT Quality Mark for Information and Communication Technology

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This school strives successfully to give every pupil the best possible start to their education. The last inspection said it provided a very high quality of education for all the pupils. The school leaders are not in any way complacent and, based on the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, work very effectively to maintain high standards and provision. Ambitious research projects, involving staff and pupils, are used frequently to analyse the school's performance and promote further improvements. It rightly judges its current performance to be outstanding. As a pupil commented, 'The only thing wrong with Lark Rise is that nobody ever wants to leave.'

Provision for children in the Nursery and the Reception classes is outstanding. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 make exceptional progress and achieve extremely well. Standards at the end of Year 2, and when pupils leave at the end of Year 4, are consistently high. Teachers focus very effectively on the development of pupils' writing, which results in exceptionally high standards. Standards in mathematics are also high and the subject is currently the focus of a research project aimed at maximising pupils' achievement. While girls achieve a little higher than boys do, this merely replicates the national picture. Pupils acquire the basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology very well and, coupled with their excellent social skills, are very well prepared for both the next stages of their education and for later life.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils are very knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, those from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Attendance is well above average and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils rapidly become confident and independent learners. They talk with passion about their work and are eager to take responsibility. Pupils clearly enjoy learning and the arrangements to listen and respond to their views are exemplary. They know how to keep safe and appreciate fully the importance of eating healthily and of taking regular exercise. It is typical to find lessons interspersed with opportunities to take exercise. Pupils contribute very well to the life of the school and to the wider community. They are very caring and supportive. For example, they raise money for many charities, entertain senior citizens and share their musical talents.

Teaching and learning are outstanding and underpin the high standards attained and rapid progress made by pupils, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils benefit greatly from the highly developed knowledge of all teachers, particularly those designated as advanced skills teachers. Lesson planning is very effective and meets the learning needs of pupils of all abilities very successfully. Teachers are exceptionally good at identifying any pupils at risk of falling behind and take swift action to ensure they do as well as they can. Questions are used very skilfully to test and extend the knowledge of the most able pupils, encouraging them to acquire enquiring minds, a passion for learning and to thrive. Marking also makes a significant contribution, providing pupils with information about the progress they are making and advice about how to make their work even better.

The curriculum is outstanding and provides pupils with an exciting and enjoyable range of learning opportunities and enrichment activities, such as residential visits to France and Germany. With this in mind, pupils are taught a range of modern foreign languages, attaining standards that far exceed those expected for their age. The arrangements to teach pupils in groups based on their ability for English and mathematics work very effectively. A current focus involves ensuring the curriculum caters fully for the individual learning needs of all pupils, presenting

them with frequent opportunities to make decisions about what they will learn, which they embrace with enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The school gives significant attention to nurturing pupils' emotional development, providing a basis for them to learn successfully. Charlie, the school dog, provides both a calming influence and source of comfort for pupils. Pupils are confident in turning to staff if they are worried about anything and are confident to express themselves openly. Pupils also helped to create a 'Chill Out' room in which they meditate and have time to reflect. Arrangements to ensure child protection and pupils' safety at all times are robust. Excellent communication with parents is a strong feature. Parents and carers are very supportive of their children's and the school's work. One parent, amongst many similar comments said, 'Lark Rise is a wonderful school. My children are doing very well and I am often amazed by their progress.' Pupils have significant insights into their progress and are very aware of what they need to do to improve. They all have 'Learning and Reflection' books in which they evaluate their work in partnership with their teachers, parents and carers.

Leadership and management are outstanding, underpinning the achievements of pupils and school. The school is forward thinking and innovative. The headteacher, senior staff and governors evaluate the performance of the school accurately and thoroughly. Everyone, including pupils, is involved in helping to make the school even better. It is at the forefront of many local and national initiatives and its work in support of other schools is exemplary. There are excellent arrangements to nurture and to promote the continued professional development of all staff. Governors are very supportive and well-informed about the work of the school. They fulfil all their duties very effectively. The school's capacity to ensure its continued improvement is outstanding.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is outstanding. Children start in the Nursery with standards that are close to those expected for their age. However, there are often pockets of underachievement in children's emotional and social development and in their communication skills. Children settle in quickly and thrive in the very supportive environment. Excellent teaching means they make rapid progress in all areas of their learning and, by the time they leave the Reception class, standards exceed those expected for their age. Children's progress is checked closely and the response to any possibility of under-achievement is prompt and effective. The curriculum addresses all areas of learning very well and children become confident and competent learners. The outdoor play area is used very effectively to make children's learning enjoyable and interesting. For example, even on a cold and frosty day, children visited the nature area to search for insect life.

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

- Use the outcomes from the schools' current research project as the basis for ensuring all pupils make the best possible progress they can in mathematics.

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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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Lark Rise Lower School, Dunstable LU6 3PT

It was a real privilege for me to visit your excellent school. You are very fortunate to be educated in such an amazing and exciting place. I would particularly like to thank the Year 4 boys for making sure I arrived at the right place at the right time. They did an excellent job. Talking with pupils at lunchtime was also a special treat. It was also a pleasure to meet Charlie, your school dog, and to see how much you love him and what a good friend he is to you all.

I was pleased to hear how much you enjoy school and I can see clearly why this is. Your teachers and teaching assistants do an outstanding job, making lessons enjoyable and exciting. I can see that you also work very hard and together you are able to do your very best and attain high standards.

You are also very lucky to have such a wide range of extra activities and school visits that help to make your learning interesting. Your behaviour is excellent, as is the way in which you care for and help each other and are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than you are. The school is also very good at caring for you and making sure you are safe. I was very impressed by the ways in which you are involved in running the school and how the adults listen to your opinions. Mrs Attard, the governors and the staff are always looking for ways to make your school even better. They are exceptionally good at involving you in doing this. For example, they are looking at ways of using the outcomes from the current 'action-research' project on mathematics to ensure that you all achieve as well as you possibly can in that subject.

I wish you all the very best the future. Keep on enjoying your education and working hard.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead Inspector