

Maidenhall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109546
Local Authority	LUTON LA
Inspection number	310018
Inspection dates	25–26 September 2007
Reporting inspector	John Mason

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	607
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Mohammed Wasil
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Surtees
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Newark Road Luton Bedfordshire LU4 8LD
Telephone number	01582430788
Fax number	01582430781

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average sized school serves a residential area of central Luton. It was formed in 2006 from the amalgamation of adjacent infant and junior schools. Almost all pupils live locally in areas which experience some social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils come from minority ethnic communities and speak English as an additional language. The school receives additional funding to support pupils at an early stage of learning English. When they start in Foundation Stage, pupils' attainment is well below the levels expected for four year olds. More pupils than average have learning difficulties or disabilities, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Maidenhall Primary School is a good school which cares greatly for the needs of its children, both pastorally and academically. In its first year since the amalgamation it has established a strong team ethos and a sense of optimism in its ability to serve the needs of the school community, many members of which have learning difficulties or disabilities or are at an early stage in learning English. While leadership is good, the headteacher and his deputy provide outstanding direction in moving the school forward.

The school sets all pupils challenging targets, to which they readily aspire. That they exceed these in English is testimony to the school's strong ability to identify and meet individual language and other learning needs at an early stage. The support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is particularly effective and enables them to make good progress. The school has recently improved its provision for pupils with learning difficulties, but this is yet to have a full impact on their progress. Flexible and skilled deployment of well qualified support staff contributes significantly to pupils' good achievement and personal development. Family workers and bilingual staff give a high priority to communicating well with parents and carers. This leads to enhanced regard for learning in the home. Complemented by the school's collaboration with external partners, this is an outstanding arrangement to promote learners' well-being. Parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the school, observe that, 'Children's learning is looked upon as a partnership.'

This inclusive ethos is well mirrored in the pupils' respectful and committed attitudes to school. They enjoy school, adopt safe and healthy practices and make a satisfactory contribution to the community.

The school is unduly modest in indicating that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory rather than good. This is because it recognises that there is still work to do to raise the quality of some class teaching. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, but the positive impact of the support for pupils and the eagerness of the pupils to learn have led them to achieve well as they progress through the school.

By the end of Foundation Stage pupils' levels are still below those expected nationally. However, their good progress in speaking and listening prepares them well for the challenges of Key Stage 1. While their mathematical development does not progress as well as their language skills in Years 1 and 2, standards in English, mathematics and science reach the national average by Year 6. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory, but is now improving.

Many staff are new to the school and others have had to adapt to the amalgamation. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Children are not always given a clear enough picture of the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Marking is variable in quality. Subject and Year team leaders have started to address these inconsistencies in teaching, but their roles are not yet fully bedded down. The satisfactory curriculum is developing greater breadth, but links between subjects are in early stages of development. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Reception with levels well below those expected for 4-year-olds in all areas of learning other than their personal and social development. Most make satisfactory progress, but in physical development, personal development and in speaking and listening their achievements are good. Standards remain well below expectations in reading and writing. Sound teaching, strong liaison with the on-site pre-school, and very good use of bilingual support contribute to the progress children make. Good, trusting relationships with adults ensure a safe and caring environment for both work and play. Independent learning is encouraged through the many opportunities they have to select activities. Strong involvement with parents and carers ensures children are well cared for and parents well supported in helping their children to succeed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Facilitate greater accountability of teachers for the quality and consistency of their teaching, through closer monitoring by middle managers.
- Improve the quality of marking to give pupils a clearer idea of the next steps in their learning and to help them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Develop stronger links between subjects in the curriculum to enable pupils to apply gains in literacy and other basic skills in a wider, more independent context.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From well below expected levels on entry to the school, pupils achieve well to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. While standards on entry to Year 1 remain below average, pupils achieve well to reach standards close to average by the end of Year 2. Progress in reading and writing is good, but in mathematics many fewer pupils than average attain the higher Level 3. Pupils continue to make good progress between Years 3 and 6. In the national tests in 2007, pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science. In science in 2007, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 increased greatly. Analysis of data and monitoring by the senior leadership team identified underachievement by boys. Changes to the curriculum and teachers' planning followed and, as a result, the achievement of boys improved and the gap between boys' and girls' performance narrowed. Pupils who have English as an additional language achieve well. Those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity make good progress and perform better than the same groups nationally. The progress of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is satisfactory, but is now improving due to better individual support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, resulting in an ethos where all faiths and cultures are valued and respected. Pupils enjoy school, build good relationships, and behave well. They feel safe and are confident that the rare incidences of bullying will be dealt with effectively. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.

Pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy healthy school meals and take part in a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. The Year 6 residential experience

helps develop pupils' social skills and confidence. Pupils take on a good range of responsibilities around the school. The school council displays initiative and its decisions have had an impact on school life, for example, in the purchase of playground equipment. Contributions to the wider community are more limited but include support for charities and supportive links with other schools. By the end of Year 6, pupils supplement the basic skills of language, number and technology with a secure sense of commitment and punctuality. This prepares them well for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although pupils make good progress in their learning, the overall quality of teaching is only satisfactory. Learning and achievement are enhanced by the good relationships and working routines which are readily established in all classes. The school's systems for identifying and supporting pupils with specific language needs are robust and effective. Flexibility in the deployment of a team of teaching assistants, many utilising their bilingualism to full effect, contributes greatly to children's understanding and learning development. Family workers make sure that learning skills are also developed through the home. Currently, lesson planning is not always sufficiently rigorous to engage all pupils in activities, especially when they have difficulties in reading. Assessment practice is inconsistent, not engaging pupils sufficiently in articulating what they have learned. Marking acknowledges good work, but does not consistently give clear pointers as to what children need to do next to improve. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting teachers, which are beginning to bring about improvement. Team teaching with senior and middle managers heightens the quality of teaching and enlivens learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

From the earliest age, the strong focus on developing pupils' speaking, listening and other communication skills across all areas of the curriculum helps them to make good progress from very low levels. While there is strong emphasis on teaching literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils also have a wide experience of physical development, humanities and the arts. Regular use of ICT in lessons by teachers and pupils links well with work to enhance their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, the school's endeavours to create a more stimulating curriculum by linking subjects together more creatively are still at an early stage of development. Effective 'catch-up' programmes are in place for those pupils who have not made as much progress as they should, but improvements to the provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are too recent to have had a full impact on improving their progress. The many opportunities to visit places of interest and a range of well supported after-school clubs enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure and safe environment, valued by pupils and parents. All of the checks required to secure the safeguarding of pupils and to ensure their health and safety have been carried out. The high quality of guidance and support is a very significant factor in pupils'

good achievement. Pupils' language needs are identified early and addressed promptly. The work of support staff, including family workers and outside agencies, in providing pastoral and academic support to pupils and their parents is outstanding. Very good support for parents, carers and families, including learning workshops, binds them well into the learning process. Improved strategies now provide effective support for those with learning difficulties or disabilities and as a result their achievement is improving. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, but their needs are not consistently met in the classroom.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

At the heart of the school's progress since the amalgamation are the drive and the determination of the senior leaders. The supportive and challenging governing body fulfils its role well, holding the school to account for its achievements and the way the budget is used. The school has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Excellent direction by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, well supported by the senior leadership team, is moving the school forward all the time. The monitoring by the senior team is astute, followed up with helpful discussion and support where needed. The responsibilities given to year and curriculum team leaders instil a high level of commitment, linked to growing accountability. Consequently, many staff play an active role in contributing to the work of the school. Along with the training undertaken by many middle managers, this provides good professional development. While middle management roles are still developing, these staff are becoming more experienced in evaluating teaching and learning and are beginning to have a positive influence on school improvement and pupils' achievement.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3

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	2
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	3
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?	3
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?	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

27 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Maidenhall Primary School, Luton, LU4 8LD

Thank you all for your welcome when the team of inspectors visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you, your parents and your teachers.

Your school has gone through a big change in the last year with the old infant school and junior school coming together to make the new Maidenhall Primary School. We were very pleased to hear that you like the new arrangements and were particularly impressed that the first pupils of the new school to do tests at the end of Year 6 last summer did so well. Did you know that although many of you have lots of difficulty learning in English when you start in school, last years' Year 6 managed to improve so well that they reached the same standards as most girls and boys in the country? And they even did slightly better in Science!

When you hear that, you won't be surprised that we think you make good progress and that your school is a good one. You told us this too when you said how much you enjoyed school and liked to get involved in the opportunities the school offers you. You like leading a healthy and safe life. Your parents are very pleased as well.

You are fortunate to have a headteacher and team of senior teachers who are so dedicated to your education and well-being. We were really impressed by the team spirit in the school and by the caring nature of all the teaching assistants and family workers who give you so much extra support. You are lucky to have so many teachers and family workers who can help you if your language at home is not English.

All your teachers are very committed to you and create a good climate in class to help you learn. We think you would make even better progress once the new teachers really get into their stride. We would like all teachers to tell you more clearly what the next steps are that you need to take to speed up your progress. We also agree that your learning would benefit from teachers making more links across the various subjects you are taught.

Finally, on behalf of all four inspectors, I would like to thank you for helping us in the inspection by being so polite and cooperative.

Yours sincerely,

John Mason

Lead Inspector