

# Renhold VC Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109603
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310034
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Frith

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	103
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Deborah Mulkerrins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs E J Ferguson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Church End Renhold Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 0LU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 771724
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 252000

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the recent work on improving mathematics, the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement and personal development and the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. She gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, pupils' work, information that the school keeps on how well pupils are doing, the school improvement plan and an analysis of the parents' questionnaire responses. 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 given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school although numbers are steadily increasing. It serves a largely rural area although a substantial number of pupils come from the urban area of East Bedford. Pupils come from families representing a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage receiving free school meals is below the national average. Typically, children enter school with attainment that is similar to that seen nationally for children of that age. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below that usually seen and varies considerably from year-to-year. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need. Approximately 80 percent of pupils are from a White British background and almost all speak English as their first language. A number of pupils transfer to the school part way through their primary education, particularly after Year 2.

The school has received the Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Active Mark, in recognition of its work in those areas.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The success of this outstanding school stems from excellent leadership and management, which focus clearly on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being and raising standards. This results in exceptional care and personal development for pupils, an innovative curriculum and outstanding achievement. The headteacher's excellent leadership gives a strong steer to school improvement. She has a particularly clear vision for the school that combines aspects of successful practice with new developments to enhance the quality of education. Staff share her vision and work well as a strong team. Teachers in charge of subjects have very good subject knowledge and keep up-to-date with new initiatives. Staff expertise is shared well through working with other schools and supervising students.

Children make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well because teaching is excellent and they quickly develop particularly good attitudes to learning. They respond well to the challenges set and by the end of Year 2, standards are at least above average and sometimes high. In Years 3 and 4, pupils build on their successes so that by the time they leave school, standards are frequently high. The excellent systems to check how well children are doing and a thorough analysis of their work mean staff are able to identify quickly what is going well and what needs to be improved. A recent focus on improving mathematics has resulted in better teaching and pupils are now making excellent progress. Staff are not complacent and constantly strive to improve their practice in order to raise standards further.

On entry to lessons, there is frequently a buzz of activity as children become engaged in their learning. Staff are particularly effective at creating a relaxed but challenging learning environment where pupils are expected to do their best. Many activities are practically based so, for example, pupils learn fractions through cutting up pizzas and learn to follow instructions by making lemonade. A key feature of the teaching is the consistency of approach adopted by staff. The planning of lessons is of a high standard. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want children to learn and share this with them. This means that pupils can clearly explain what they are doing and learning. They are confident to tackle the work because it matches well to their differing abilities. Teaching assistants also give excellent support. Consequently, pupils are confident, feel able to succeed and this feeling of success helps to develop their interest in school and learning. Staff have embraced the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve their teaching and motivate pupils' learning.

The curriculum is of a high quality and designed to be interesting and meet pupils' needs. The six major themes in Years 1 to 4 ensure that art, music and creativity form the basis of pupils' work. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are linked exceptionally well into these themes so they are taught in context and consequently make learning more relevant. This encourages excellent progress. Staff use the curriculum equally effectively to help pupils develop socially and emotionally. The early focus in Foundation Stage on encouraging independence and responsibility is extended throughout the school so that by the time they leave, children are confident and well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are very well aware of their roles and responsibilities within the school community and beyond, and are proud of what they do and achieve. They understand the impact of their actions on others and feel they can make a difference through, for example, their work in the school council and raising money for a range of charities. They readily make friends, care for others and the school guinea pigs! They have a particularly good understanding of how to live healthy and safe lives through, for example, plenty of exercise, sports activities and clubs and learning how to protect themselves.

Because pupils find learning fun the vast majority behave very well. This helps to create a good school ethos. Staff give particularly good additional support to the very few pupils who find it difficult to respond readily to their high expectations and pupils, too, encourage good behaviour. Most attend school regularly and on time and attendance is good. Exceptional care, guidance and support mean that pupils' needs are met very well and they feel safe and happy in school.

The relatively new governing body are knowledgeable about the school and this gives them the confidence to ask questions, for example, about standards and the curriculum, and ensures they are involved in school improvement. Self-evaluation is extremely effective because there is a continuous cycle of review and development which ensures excellent improvement. Many parents are very positive about the school as can be seen from the following representative comment, 'My son goes to school every morning with a smile on his face and comes home enthusiastic about his day'. Approximately a third of parents who completed the questionnaire raised concerns across a range of areas. These concerns were not substantiated by the inspection findings. Staff have recognised that parents need to know more about the school, its work and what is achieved there and to engage more fully in all aspects of school life.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children's development in the Foundation Stage is impressive in relation to their starting points and gains in learning are frequently excellent. Children quickly become happy, confident learners because expectations are clear and routines helpful. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this very effectively to plan activities which maintain children's interest and ensure excellent progress. They become confident and happily play with others. They find learning fun. Very good organisation and resources ensure that children have good opportunities to work closely with adults whilst also developing independence when choosing their own activities. Staff focus exceptionally well on developing children's communication skills by encouraging speaking and listening and developing their confidence and accuracy in writing. Because of excellent provision, most children are working beyond the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Provision reflects excellent management and leadership and the high expectations of what young children can do.

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

- Engage parents in all aspects of school life, so that they gain a clearer understanding of what the school achieves and a more realistic view of its high standards and successes.

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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	2
How well 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	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	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

23 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Renhold V C Lower School, Bedford MK41 0LU

You might remember that I recently came to visit your school to see what you were learning and talk to you about your work. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I really enjoyed being in your lessons and watching you learn and play. I think you go to an excellent school and I have listed below some of the things I particularly like.

- You try hard, make excellent progress and frequently reach high standards.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well because you are very interested in what you are doing.
- You know such a lot about how to stay healthy and safe. Your active assemblies and wide range of other sporting and physical activities ensure you get a lot of exercise.
- The staff enjoy teaching you and work very well as a team to make sure that teaching is excellent.
- You feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you know what to do if anyone behaves badly, and talk to a member of staff or use the worry box if you have problems.

Mrs Ferguson is an excellent headteacher and is helped a lot by the rest of the staff and governors. They have agreed to ensure that your parents understand more clearly what the school does and how successful it is, so they can fully appreciate how well you are doing. You can help by encouraging your parents to get involved in as many school activities as they possibly can.

I left your school confident that it will continue to improve and wish you all well in the future. I know you will continue to try hard and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Additional inspector