

Ley Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110243
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310233
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alastair Durno
Headteacher	Mr Paul de Koning
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Ley Hill Chesham HP5 1YF
Telephone number	01494 784205
Fax number	01494 784055

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science
- the quality of teaching and the school's curriculum for basic skills
- the effectiveness of school leaders in addressing underachievement
- how effectively academic guidance ensures that pupils make good progress.

Evidence was gathered from the examination of school documentation, discussions with pupils, school staff and governors, and observations of lessons and other school activities. The inspector also took account of the views of parents expressed in questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

Ley Hill is an average sized school, which serves a relatively advantaged community. Most pupils are of White British heritage and none is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is much lower than average and mostly includes pupils with a range of moderate learning difficulties. The school has received a number of awards for its work including Artsmark Gold, Activemark Gold, Healthy Schools and Eco Schools. It is also recognised as an Investor in People. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Most parents and pupils are rightly proud of Ley Hill because it is a good school. The headteacher and the committed staff ensure that the care and welfare of every child are at the heart of the school's work. They are successful in providing pupils with good basic skills and a rich range of experiences, which significantly enhance their confidence and enjoyment, as well as instilling a very strong sense of citizenship. This is recognised by many parents. Comments such as, 'There is a wonderful atmosphere at Ley Hill' and 'The school helps to develop a well-rounded individual who is aware of the world we live in', typified their responses. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils feel safe and secure and thrive in the supportive environment. They are unfailingly friendly and polite and their behaviour is exemplary. They enjoy all that school has to offer and achieve well.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and build on these firm foundations to make good progress as they move through the school. By the time they leave, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average. In 2007, around half of the Year 6 pupils reached the highest level possible for their age. Allied to very positive attitudes to learning, this ensures that they are well prepared for secondary school and the world beyond. Although standards remain high they have fallen somewhat in recent years, and school leaders recognise that some pupils have not achieved well enough during their time in Key Stage 2. In response, the leaders have introduced a more rigorous system for tracking the progress of each individual. This is enabling them to identify potential underachievement at an earlier stage and to provide additional support to help pupils to catch up. In consequence, pupils of all abilities are now making good progress and the current Year 6 pupils have achieved well from their starting points. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good progress because of the support they receive from an effective team of teaching assistants, with many reaching the levels expected for their age.

Pupils are also achieving well because of good teaching and their enthusiasm for learning. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their classes and often plan interesting activities, which stimulate and engage learners. Pupils respond particularly well whenever they have the opportunities to develop and discuss their own ideas. This was particularly evident in a Year 5 lesson, where pupils were acting as enthusiastic archaeologists exploring the contents of Tutankhamen's tomb. Similarly, in a Year 4 science lesson pupils demonstrated well-developed scientific skills when investigating the properties of solids and liquids. In both these lessons, there was a buzz of enthusiasm and high quality discussion. However, pupils sometimes sit for too long without active participation and teachers miss opportunities to involve them in discussion by, for example, getting them to work with a partner. In consequence, the momentum of these lessons slows and pupils are not able to consolidate their understanding. Teachers are beginning to use the new assessment systems to set challenging targets for all pupils, but this is at a relatively early stage of development.

The range of curriculum enrichment is outstanding and enables pupils to develop skills and interests in a wide range of areas. As well as a diverse range of clubs, French is taught in Key Stage 2 and the school has links with schools in a range of countries. Many pupils told the inspector how much they enjoy the sporting opportunities in particular. On the day of the inspection, Year 3 pupils took part in a dance festival in the morning, and Year 5 pupils returned triumphant from a tag rugby tournament in the afternoon. These activities contribute very well to pupils' excellent appreciation of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils also make an

outstanding contribution to their school community, through the school council, for example. They are also highly aware of environmental issues and raise money for a range of charities. One parent, summarising the views of others, remarked 'The children are aware of how they can make a difference to preserve the environment and want to help those less fortunate than themselves.'

The headteacher has led the school successfully for many years and is highly respected by pupils, parents and governors. He is well supported by his new deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. Together they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and have put in place effective strategies for improvement whenever weaknesses are identified. For example, a focus on boys' writing in recent years has led to improvements in attainment. There is also evidence that current initiatives in mathematics and investigative science are leading to better progress for pupils. Whilst leaders at all levels take their responsibilities very seriously, their roles in terms of improving teaching and learning and raising achievement are not fully developed. Governors are committed and knowledgeable and offer a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. The school's track record of success, together with recent improvements, indicate that it has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Several parents commented on how welcoming the school is when their children join in the Nursery. The lively and stimulating environment enables children to settle quickly and to become confident and eager learners. They arrive with skills and understanding, which are generally better than those of most three-year-olds and make rapid progress as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes. By the time they reach Year 1 almost all attain the goals expected for children of that age and many exceed them. Staff work closely together to plan interesting activities to develop children's skills in all areas of their learning, making full use of the inside and outside areas. Children have many opportunities to explore the world around them and to develop their interests as well as benefiting from activities led by adults. Assessment is meticulous and helps staff to track the progress of every child carefully in order to plan the next stages of their learning. The Foundation Stage is extremely well led and coordinated.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils to achieve as well as they can by providing them with regular opportunities to discuss and develop their ideas.
- Ensure that teachers use the new tracking systems consistently to set challenging targets for all pupils.
- Develop the role of leaders at all levels in improving teaching and learning and raising 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	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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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

03 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ley Hill School, Chesham, HP5 1YF

You may remember that I visited your school recently. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my day at Ley Hill. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

You and your parents are right to be pleased with the school because it gives you a good education. I was really impressed with your behaviour and your enthusiasm in lessons. Well done! The school looks after you very well and helps you to develop as healthy, thoughtful and caring young people. You really appreciate the extra activities you have to do and many of you told me how much you enjoy sport in particular. Congratulations to the tag rugby team in Year 5! I also thought your very good understanding of how to make a contribution to environmental issues is of great benefit to the community.

You get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and generally make good progress as you move through the school. You are well prepared for moving on to secondary school. You and your parents told me how much teachers make learning fun for you. The new assessment systems are helping the teachers to make sure that you all continue to make good progress.

Your headteacher has led your school very well for many years. It is a shame that he was not able to be there for my visit. He gets lots of help from all the staff and governors and they are determined to make the school even better for you. I have asked them to do a few things that I think might help.

- I have asked the teachers to give you plenty of opportunities to talk about your ideas with each other to improve your learning even more.
- I want the teachers to use the new assessment systems to set targets for all which make sure that you do as well as you can.
- The school has a lot of talented teachers. I want the school to use their strengths to help the teachers to make things even better for you.

Best of luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector