

# Steeple Claydon School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110248
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310237
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Malcolm Johnstone

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	125
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	15
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr James Vignoles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian Hopkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Meadoway Steeple Claydon Buckingham MK18 2PA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 738 132
<b>Fax number</b>	01296 738 635

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

In this smaller than average school, almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupil mobility is above average. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) there are 15 children in the Reception Class. Most children join this class in the September of the year in which they become five. There is also on-site independent Nursery provision housed in a Children's Centre. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, School Travel Plan and Activemark Award. A new headteacher and three new teachers took up post at the start of the current term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. It has improved over the past year and improvement has gathered more rapid momentum with the appointment of a new headteacher. Self evaluation is good and the headteacher has quickly identified key areas for improvement. He has already put in place a number of initiatives to improve standards in line with a good school improvement plan. He has been particularly successful in providing clear direction shared with all who work in the school, raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and in empowering key senior managers to more effectively develop their roles. They say that they feel valued and enthused. Leadership, management and governance are currently satisfactory. It is too early to judge the full impact of the new management and initiatives on pupil outcomes. As a consequence, the current capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

Almost all of the parents who expressed their views supported the school in all aspects of its work and many felt there was a new optimism in the school. As one parent commented, 'I am sure that the new headteacher will take the school forward to another level'. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well and the good rate of attendance is testament to their enjoyment of school and the strong family ethos.

Achievement is satisfactory. Most children enter school with skills and abilities that are generally below those expected for their age. Effective teaching enables them to make good progress in the Reception class. In the rest of the school, pupils' progress is satisfactory and, overall, standards are below average by the end of Year 6. Standards fell in 2006. However, over the past year, with good support from the local authority and a more settled staffing situation, the school has successfully managed to halt this decline. More pupils are now reaching the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are not as high as those in reading, and in English and mathematics, not enough pupils are reaching the higher National Curriculum levels.

Whilst there is some good teaching in the school, it is satisfactory overall. Teachers and classroom assistants establish good relationships with the pupils and their high expectations of behaviour result in orderly lessons. Nonetheless, too many lessons do not have enough stimulating or challenging activities to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for the more able. This stems from weaknesses in day-to-day assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers often plan from what they think pupils should know, rather than from what they actually know.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is being revised to provide greater continuity of learning and more meaningful links between subjects. It includes a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. There are good links with parents and a range of other schools and agencies. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good. However, not all pupils have been supported enough in their academic achievement and some have underachieved in the past. This is now improving with more accurate use of tracking data. This is helping additional support to be targeted where it is most needed and helping increase pupils' progress.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the EYFS and make good progress. This is because teaching and teamwork is good. Progress in children's personal development is particularly good. Children are well behaved, happy learners. Despite the good progress, a minority do not achieve all the early learning goals, particularly in communication, language and literacy. As a result, there is now a stronger focus on work to link letters and sounds. Effective planning ensures that there is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. Assessment is good and children's progress is checked regularly. The outcomes of assessments and observation of children's learning are used effectively to plan the next stages of learning. There is an exciting and stimulating curriculum that includes good free flow use of the outdoor and indoor learning environment. Warm relationships between children and staff ensure that children are willing to have a go at new things. There are good links with the on-site Nursery. Leadership is good. Provision is constantly reviewed and improved. The need for more large outdoor equipment to develop children's physical skills and curriculum continuity between Reception and Year 1 are areas identified for further development.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement with a particular focus upon writing and mathematics and upon increasing the number of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better and enables pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that there is greater accuracy and consistency in the tracking of pupils' progress and that the use of classroom assessment leads to more challenging work, particularly for the more able.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

There has been a downward trend in standards since 2006 due to inconsistency in the quality of teaching and a lack of sufficient rigour in tracking pupils' progress. As a result, targets have not been met. There are now signs of improvement. Standards in reading are broadly average but standards remain below average in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. They are below average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. This is largely because few pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels. While the more able pupils achieve satisfactorily, they should be doing better. Standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) have improved markedly and are now broadly average. Pupils with LDD make similar progress to all other pupils. Those pupils who join the school other than at the normal entry time make satisfactory progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The warm relationships between staff and pupils create a positive environment that results in good behaviour and a strong work ethic. Almost all parents support this view. Pupils are polite and courteous towards visitors, enjoy school and get on well together. They are able to work together as a team, in pairs and independently. Pupils learn about and respect the views, values and beliefs of others. They have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and know the importance of a sensible diet and regular exercise. A good range of responsibilities, for example, to serve on the school council is accepted eagerly. Pupils develop good personal qualities that prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Overall, however, preparation for the next stage of their education is satisfactory because of their below average basic skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching. While there is some good teaching and none that is unsatisfactory, there is a lack of consistency across the school. Typical strengths in the teaching are relationships, teamwork, classroom management, high expectations of behaviour and opportunities provided for pupils to work in pairs, small groups and independently. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to learning. In satisfactory lessons, the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. This means that they are not motivated to make better progress and achieve higher standards. Classroom assessment lacks accuracy and rigour so that it is particularly difficult for teachers to match work to the different needs of the class. The focus last year on better teaching of phonics and investigative science has had a clear impact on standards and pupils' progress. It is recognised that the focus now needs to shift to achieving the same level of consistency in the teaching of writing and mathematics.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is improving and last year a more creative approach was introduced with more first hand experiences and a wider variety of activities to motivate the pupils and link subjects together. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment is good with many opportunities for pupils to take part in the activities and visits into the community and further afield. There have been breaks in the continuity of learning, largely due to staff changes and insufficient account being taken of the ability profile and tracking data of individuals when they transfer to another class. The headteacher is working with some success to address this issue. ICT is used well to support learning across the curriculum, although opportunities to use writing skills in support of work in other subjects are more limited.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The promotion of pupils' health and safety is good. There are effective child protection and safeguarding arrangements. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and new pupils are welcomed into the school and settle quickly. Pupils say that they feel safe and confident in approaching

an adult should they have any concerns. Procedures to support pupils who have LDD are satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in the use of intervention strategies to help accelerate their progress. Arrangements for tracking and recording pupils' academic attainment are improving but teachers do not use this information well enough to make sure pupils make the best possible progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. There is a clear feeling of togetherness in the school with all pulling in the same direction. There has been some marked improvement in science and reading across the school. Senior staff who are responsible for English and mathematics now have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and are being given the time, support and training to help them achieve this. The headteacher is ensuring that there is greater accuracy and use of tracking data. Target-setting, although improving, is satisfactory. It has maintained standards at a satisfactory level rather than accelerating pupils' progress in line with their capabilities. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very committed to their role in the school and have fully supported the new headteacher in the drive to raise standards. They are now much more aware of the improvements needed and are increasingly holding the school to account for the standards it achieves.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Steeple Claydon School, Buckingham, MK18 2PA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I came to find out how well you and your school are doing. I found that your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that there are many good things happening but still some important things that should be better.

It was good to talk with you and to see you working in lessons. You behave well and always try to do your best. You were very polite and friendly and told me what you enjoy most. I was pleased to see how well you get on together and how much you know about healthy eating and keeping safe. You are doing well with your reading, computer work and science but I know you can do better with your writing and mathematics.

I know that all the teachers and other adults who work in school care very much about you and want to do the best for you. Your new headteacher is beginning to introduce many new ideas to make your school even better and I know you will help him all you can.

In order to help all of you to do as well as you possibly can I have asked the school to:

- help all of you to reach higher standards in writing and mathematics
- ensure that all of the teaching in school is good so that you make the best possible progress
- keep a closer check on how well you are doing so that the work you do makes you always think harder, especially those of you who sometimes find your work rather easy.

With your help, I am sure the school will become even better.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Johnstone

Lead Inspector