

# Pepper Hill First School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110330
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	310260
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Williams

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Ellie Treadwell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Maxine Low
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Kingsfold Bradville Milton Keynes MK13 7BQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 312912
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 318378

---

<b>Age group</b>	3-7
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 September 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	310260

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, leadership and management, gathering evidence from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Prior to September 2006, Pepper Hill took pupils up to Year 3 and it was previously inspected as a first school. The school serves an area containing significant deprivation and an above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are White British, while the proportions from minority ethnic backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language are similar to those found in most schools. The number identified with learning difficulties has increased in recent years and is above average. Many of the teaching staff joined in the last year. The school has Investors in People and healthy schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This improving school provides a good education for its pupils and has some outstanding features. The school makes a difference for pupils because it is well led and managed, provides high quality care and good, occasionally outstanding, teaching that enable pupils to develop as confident learners. As a result, pupils achieve well academically and make excellent progress in their personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's efforts. Amongst the many very positive comments, 'My child is very happy and loves to learn. He has settled down and continues to thrive,' is typical of their views.

Pupils' attainment when they first join the school is below average. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. This is higher than at the time of the last inspection, although the results of national assessments for seven year olds have varied in recent years due, largely, to differences in the make-up of each year group. The anticipated drop in results in 2007 still represented good progress for those pupils. There is no complacency, however. The excellent headteacher ensures that every aspect of the school's work is evaluated fully and there is a strong determination that standards should rise consistently. Areas for development, for example the current drive to raise standards in writing, are identified and clear plans of action are implemented to achieve the necessary improvement. In addition, efforts to improve the transition in pupils' writing from the Foundation Stage to Year 1 are proving to be successful. Staff, including the very capable senior team, share this commitment to school improvement. Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role and are developing good systems that enable them to hold the school to account. The leaders set, and usually meet, challenging targets to raise standards and improve pupils' rate of attendance.

Good learning is at the heart of everything the school does. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They make sure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and how they will know if they are successful. Pupils behave impeccably in and out of lessons, a significant improvement since the last inspection, and excellent relationships amongst pupils and with staff help lessons to run very smoothly. Teaching and support staff work very well together to ensure that those who need extra help get it and more able pupils are challenged to reach the higher levels of which they are capable. Staff question skilfully and keep an eye on any misunderstandings, which they deal with sensitively. Interactive white boards are used well to make lessons interesting and fun. For their part, pupils see themselves as 'powerful learners' and they talk enthusiastically, and with great insight, about what this means. They respond very well to the praise they get from staff, understand their 'golden rules,' are keen to learn and eager to please. These positive attitudes have a significant impact on their progress. Good progress in basic skills means that pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They have a very well developed understanding of how to lead a healthy life and are keen to point out the healthy aspects of the food they eat. Good learning extends beyond the classroom, through the very good range of activities that enrich the curriculum and the well-organised opportunities at lunch and break-times. These contribute very well to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Assessment arrangements have been transformed since the last inspection. A very close check is kept on pupils' progress and this information is used well to plan the next steps for pupils. The school monitors these systems very closely to ensure that new staff become fully acquainted with the processes and this, rightly, remains a priority. Teachers provide very good written and verbal feedback for pupils and give them clear, individual learning targets. As a result, pupils

have a remarkable understanding of how well they are doing and how they should improve. All pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background are valued and included fully in everything the school offers. Excellent support is provided for pupils who are potentially vulnerable, or have particular needs, and exceptionally well-managed links with outside agencies contribute to this high quality provision. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and they appreciate the help they get from staff.

A combination of rigorous self-evaluation, high aspirations and a clear vision for the school's development have been instrumental in raising standards, improving behaviour and increasing the quality of care and support for pupils. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst all of the adults who work or help in school and a commitment to listening to what pupils, parents and other stakeholders have to say. The school is successfully extending its role as the focal point for learning in the local community and many parents run successful adult groups. The individual strengths and interests of staff and governors are used well to make sure that challenges are met thoughtfully and innovatively. The school is exceptionally well-placed to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children join the Foundation Unit from a variety of settings, although only about half have formal pre-school experience. A combination of very effective teaching, good leadership and exceptional planning means that the children achieve well from their starting points, although standards are below those expected at the end of Reception. Staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and their innovative planning focuses sharply on pupils' particular interests. Children show considerable maturity when they review and reflect upon their learning in the 'children's parliament' and plan their next steps. Staff monitor their all-round development very carefully and have recently introduced systems to check on the progress of different groups of children. Many children benefit from the quiet, reflective 'kaleidoscope' group. Relationships in the Foundation Unit are excellent. Children thrive in this thoughtful and supportive setting and get off to a good start in their education.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in writing.
- Monitor assessment systems to ensure consistency across the school.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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?	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>	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	1
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**

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pepper Hill First School, Milton Keynes, MK13 7BQ

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed me to school for the recent inspection. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you work and play. A special thank you to those of you who met with me to tell me what you think about your school. You gave me lots of helpful information. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

I agree with you, your parents and teachers that Pepper Hill is a good school. I was very impressed with how you all work together to make sure you do your best. You told me that you are 'powerful learners' and I agree. You are doing well because your excellent headteacher and your teachers do a good job. They take very good care of you and make sure you feel safe. You do your bit, too, because your behaviour is excellent, in lessons and on the playground, and you try hard with your work.

Your school is getting better all the time because everyone in it works together as a team. Even though it is a good school, your headteacher and teachers want it to be even better. I agree with them that there are two ways they can do this. Firstly, they are going to keep trying to help you improve your work, especially your writing. Secondly, your teachers keep a close check on how you are doing but, because some of your teachers are new, they need more time to get used to the way this is done. I am sure you will help them by trying hard with everything you do, just as you do now.

Once again, thank you very much for your help and good luck for the future.

Keith Williams

Lead inspector