

Kents Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110402
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	310288
Inspection date	11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Jolly
Headteacher	Mrs H Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Birdlip Lane Kents Hill Milton Keynes MK7 6HD
Telephone number	01908 240038
Fax number	01908 240038

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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: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, leadership and management, gathering evidence from: lesson observations, discussion with staff and pupils, 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.

The school has before and after-school care clubs and provides 'wrap-around' care for its Nursery children, which some parents choose to pay for in addition to their children's part-time education. These facilities were inspected by a Child Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils at this smaller than average infant school are from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, although most are of White British heritage. The proportion learning English as an additional language is similar to that found in most schools and is increasing. The number identified with learning difficulties is smaller than usually found. An above average proportion change schools at other than the usual times. The school has healthy schools and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We can't speak highly enough of this school,' commented one parent, reflecting the views of many. 'As well as the learning environment we especially like the caring, secure atmosphere here.' Indeed, the high quality of care provided for pupils is one of a number of outstanding features of this good school. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are able to learn in a safe and stimulating environment. As a result, they make excellent progress in their personal development and achieve well academically. Pupils join the school with wide ranging skills that, taken overall, are below average. Good teaching means that pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 2.

The very strong senior team, under the expert guidance of the headteacher, ensures that everything the school does is focused on enabling pupils to fulfil their potential. They are well on the way to achieving this. Staff assess pupils' work regularly and this information is used well to ensure that lessons provide the right amount of support or challenge. As a result, pupils achieve well, regardless of their background or ability, because all are valued and included fully in school life. There are very good procedures for recording assessments and tracking pupils' progress. This information is used very well to target help where it is most needed. Pupils are set personal targets for their learning, which they understand and use to improve their work. Those who find learning difficult are catered for very well, as are the increasing numbers who are new to learning English. Similarly, a careful and sensitive check is kept on the all-round development of potentially vulnerable pupils. The school co-ordinates the involvement of a large number of outside agencies very effectively and this has a significant impact on pupils' learning and well-being. All of the required systems to ensure the protection of children and the suitability of adults in school are very secure.

To supplement the information about pupils' progress, there are strong systems to evaluate test results, monitor lessons and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. All the resulting information is used rigorously to identify what is working well and what can be improved. All staff share the senior leaders' drive to raise standards and they work determinedly to improve the quality of their teaching. This is one of the reasons why teaching is good, and staff are not complacent. They are working hard to ensure that even more lessons are good ones, for example, by improving consistency in the marking of pupils' work. The main focus of the school's recent work has been to raise standards in writing. The way that daily literacy lessons are taught has been modified, so that extra time can be spent on developing reading and writing. This is working well, but the school recognises that there is still more to do, particularly in ensuring that more of the pupils capable of reaching the higher levels in writing do so.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of interesting and exciting activities that teachers provide and this contributes immensely to their great love of school. A two-year cycle of planning for all subjects is ensuring that pupils build on their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move from class-to-class. The planning promotes pupils' personal and social development very well and ensures that they have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They particularly enjoy the many opportunities to play energetically on the excellent playground and grounds. The school council makes a strong contribution to school life and there are many opportunities for pupils to play a part in the wider community. Large numbers enjoy the very good range of clubs and other activities offered outside of lessons.

Pupils behave extremely well and report that they feel safe in school. Their enjoyment and very positive attitudes are not reflected, however, in their attendance rate. Despite the school's best efforts, this remains stubbornly below the national average. Close analysis reveals that much of the absence is due to the poor attendance of a few pupils, and from a large number of families taking holidays during term time. The school works hard to tackle this by providing an environment that pupils enjoy, promoting good attendance and by following up absences systematically. They recognise that there is still more to do, however, to ensure that all pupils receive the full benefit of their time in school. Despite this, pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Their good progress in the basic skills is supplemented by good opportunities to work in teams, for example, when raising funds for Cedric. In addition, the provision for information and communication technology has improved considerably since the last inspection. Year 2 pupils were seen using an impressive range of computer skills as they prepared a multi-media presentation about Hinduism. This cross-curricular approach reflects a strong and highly successful commitment to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school leaders, well supported by staff and governors, have created a school where the care, welfare and all-round development of pupils are paramount. They have a very accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and they tackle areas for development determinedly. They are exceptionally well placed to improve the school further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teamwork is very strong across the school and is nowhere more evident than in the Foundation Stage. Teaching and support staff work seamlessly together to ensure that children settle into the Nursery and Reception classes very quickly and learn well. One parent noted that her daughter settled so quickly, '...because the staff were so welcoming...a great team.' Early assessments of children's capabilities mean that work is very well matched to their particular needs. Staff are rightly reviewing the balance of opportunities to work with an adult and those where children work more independently. Children enjoy school very much. Some took great delight in making fruit smoothies and offering them to their visitors. A strong feature is the way that Nursery and Reception children play together when using the excellent outdoor facilities. As a result of the good provision, from their starting points, children achieve well and most reach the goals expected of them by the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing, particularly for those capable of reaching the higher levels.
- Work with parents to improve pupils' rate of attendance.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	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	3
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

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	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	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

19 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kents Hill School, Milton Keynes, MK7 6HD

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed me when I visited your school recently. I was pleased to speak to so many of you and watch you learning and playing. A special thank you to those of you who came and told me all about the school and your work. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

Lots of you told me how much you enjoy school and I could see that for myself in your classrooms and outside. Many of your parents told me that they think this is a good school and I agree with them. There are lots of excellent things happening. Mrs Anderson and the other adults work very hard to make sure that you are safe and very well looked after. One of the reasons you do well is because your teachers give you lots of exciting things to learn. You do your bit, too, because your behaviour is excellent and you are always keen and ready to work hard. I like your playgrounds, gardens and field very much because there is so much for you to do to stay fit, healthy and enjoy playtimes.

Even though your school is good, your teachers want it to be even better and there are two things I have asked them to do. You have all been working very hard to improve your writing and it is getting better. Your teachers are going to keep working on this, so that everyone, including those of you who are already good at writing, gets even better. I am sure you will want to help your teachers by doing your very best whenever you write. Some of you have too much time off school. I agree with your teachers that they should work with your parents to make sure that you come to school more often. Remember, you can only do your best work if you come to school every day.

I know you will want to help your teachers to make your school even better and I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead inspector