

Sundon Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109485
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	324967
Inspection date	12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	70
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Frances Wood
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Fairclough
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Streatley Road Upper Sundon Luton Bedfordshire LU3 3PQ
Telephone number	01525872357
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and progress made in literacy and numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2. Evidence was gathered from classroom visits, discussions with staff and pupils and examination of school documents, especially assessment data. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Sundon Lower is much smaller than other lower schools. Pupils mainly come from the surrounding area and the vast majority are of White British origin with a very small number from White and Asian background, and from other Asian backgrounds. A very small number of pupils speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who qualify for a free school meal is below average. The number who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. The attainment of children when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is generally below that of similar-aged children. The school has just been granted Trust status and gained the Healthy School Award in 2006

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sundon Lower is a good school and its accurate self-evaluation supports this judgement. However, inspectors judge that some aspects of its work are in fact outstanding. It is a happy school, with a very positive climate for learning where all pupils make good progress in both their academic and personal development. The overwhelming majority of parents are very pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. Comments such as, 'we are pleased our daughter attends such a friendly, well structured and well managed school', reflect this level of satisfaction.

Good leadership at all levels and satisfactory governance have ensured that the school has sustained good standards despite going through a period of uncertainty regarding the permanent headship of the school. These difficulties have now been successfully resolved and under the very capable direction of the new headteacher the school has entered a new and exciting phase in its development.

The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are being taught well with all pupils making good progress across the school from their standards which are average when they start in Year 1, to reach well above that expected nationally by the end of Year 4 in English and mathematics. Standards in writing in Year 4 are particularly high and lines of poetry such as 'In the night time darkness, in the night time cold, watch the dazzling fireworks unfold,' fully reflect this good achievement.

The personal and social development of the pupils is outstanding. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils freely state that they love coming to school because they are always learning new things. They are very keen to talk to visitors about all of the exciting things they learn and do at school. The curriculum is good. Older pupils work very hard in lessons to achieve what the teacher asks of them, responding well to high quality diagnostic marking and individual targets set for them in literacy and numeracy. All pupils are developing a very good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their community by raising money for national charities and participating in School Council activities. The celebration of Diwali and study of a village in India are raising the pupils' awareness of people from other cultures whilst effectively promoting community cohesion. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All pupils are fully prepared for their next stage of learning. Attendance is average and continues to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding practice in evidence for older pupils. Lesson planning is detailed and what pupils are expected to learn is made clear to pupils at the start of each lesson, providing an effective structure for the assessment of individual progress. Teachers demonstrate good use of questions and resources to support key teaching points. Overall, pupils are managed well and most lessons move along at a brisk pace. However, occasionally inefficient use of time results in missed opportunities for pupils to achieve what is asked of them.

Excellent levels of care and support throughout the school ensure that all pupils achieve well as they can. Safeguarding procedures are robust and rigorously applied. Well-qualified support staff play a vital role in ensuring that pupils who find learning difficult and/or have disabilities achieve as well as their classmates. Procedures for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' achievements are impressive. Information gathered is used very effectively to monitor pupil

progress, promote challenge and plan high quality learning experiences. Comprehensive 'Learning Logs' effectively capture the pupils' individual records of achievement.

All weaknesses noted at the time of the previous inspection related to the teaching of reading have been fully rectified. Furthermore, the school continues to increase the proportion of pupils attaining high standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 4. The school's capacity for further improvement is good. Taking all factors into account, the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start and develop a firm foundation in basic skills. They enter the Nursery class with standards below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication, and in personal, social and emotional development. Children make good progress and meet the goals set for them by the end of Reception. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly into the routines of the Nursery. Well-established routines help the children to develop positive relationships. They work and play together harmoniously, enjoy school and respond positively to the stimulating learning environments. The outdoor facility is currently out of use, due to the building works. Children therefore use the main playground with suitably planned opportunities for regular exercise, well linked to other areas of learning. There is a lot of encouragement for children to participate fully and engage in what is on offer, particularly in activities directed by the adults. However, their opportunities are limited to be independent and creative in their learning and to use their initiative.

Children are well supported in their learning and development. Activities are planned effectively to meet the needs of all abilities and support staff work well with individuals and groups of children. A good emphasis is placed on the systematic teaching of phonics which makes a good contribution to the children's early reading and writing skills. The learning environment is safe and secure and well resourced, and being improved by investment in play equipment and a covered area outdoors, which is developing well. Children's welfare is a high priority and robust arrangements are in place for their safeguarding. Good procedures support children entering the Nursery and Reception and when moving into Year 1. The assessment of children's progress is methodical and provides a good overview of their development.

The EYFS provision is led and managed well. A clear plan for future improvements is in place. Parents are very supportive and happy with the provision. One commented, ' My child settled in quickly, his confidence has grown enormously and he enjoys all aspects of his learning'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teaching across the school makes best use of time and is consistently good.
- Provide greater opportunities for children in the EYFS to develop their skills of independence and creativity.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

13 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sundon Lower School, Upper Sundon, LU33PQ

I would like to thank you all on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed visiting your school and were so impressed with how you get on so well with each other. It was so pleasing to see that you all love taking part in all the good things that the staff plan for you to do. You clearly enjoy being at school and are keen to talk about your experiences with others. It was good to see you playing happily together in the play areas.

Your behaviour is excellent and we noticed that you work hard in lessons to complete the work set for you. This is because the teachers and other staff work hard as a team to make lessons interesting and challenging. However, some lessons are not always as good as they could be. This is because sometimes teachers do not make the best use of time and the youngest children in the school do not always get the chance to work on their own or use their imagination. These are things the teachers are going to work at, in future.

Mrs Fairclough leads and manages the school well and under her guidance all the staff work together to ensure you get the best level of care and support for you to do well at school. They have all been working hard to help you improve your literacy and numeracy skills. In fact, I was very impressed with the standard of writing by those of you in Year 4.

The governors work hard to make sure that your headteacher and staff get the support that they need so that the school runs smoothly. They are now beginning to work more closely with the staff to learn what is needed to make the school even better.

Thanks again for making us so welcome and I wish you all the very best for the future,

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector