

# Totternhoe Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109488
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	324968
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	79
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	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gifford Kelly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Janet Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 October 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>	Church Road Totternhoe Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 1RE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582662959
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 673826

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<b>Age group</b>	4–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspection looked at the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) in detail. The inspectors also evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues: aspects of care guidance and support, particularly the monitoring of progress and the support for pupils who find learning difficult; key features of personal development and aspects of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from external data, the information that the school has on tracking pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation form and school improvement plan, and lesson observations. Discussions were held with the headteacher, a member of the governing body and a group of Year 4 pupils. Parents' questionnaires were analysed and the school's systems for safeguarding pupils were checked. Other aspects were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate within the report.

## Description of the school

This small school serves a village community with about half of the pupils coming from further afield. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils who have difficulties with their learning is well below average. Three quarters of the school population are White British and the remaining quarter of pupils is from a range of ethnic heritages. The roll is relatively stable. The school has gained national Healthy School status and has gained an award in recognition of its international work. The school runs a breakfast and after school club. Children are admitted into the EYFS the term following their fourth birthday. Children join the school with knowledge and skills typical of the age group.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The start of the day provides helpful insights into the school. Staff greet pupils warmly and children and their parents are made very welcome. A pupil chats very happily to the headteacher about the sparkly toy frog she has brought in for a lesson. A parent has a quick conversation with a teacher, whilst in the classroom a child proudly shows her mum some work. There is a strong sense of community, warmth and a positive ethos and it is easy to see why parents wrote in such glowing terms about the school, citing the friendliness and approachability of staff, the 'hands-on' approach of the headteacher and the quality of support given to their child.

It is evident that the headteacher and other staff know the pupils extremely well. Pupils feel very secure and enjoy school a great deal. They are valued as individuals and are helped to develop confidence because of the excellent relationships adults have with them. They enjoy learning because of the interesting things that they do and this is reflected in their excellent attendance. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are extremely well aware of the importance of exercise and diet. Small touches, such as the 'healthy' place mats on the dining room tables not only reinforce what they have learned in lessons but also help create a sense of occasion associated with meal times. Pupils contribute very effectively to the local community through various activities and links with the church; the school is a 'star' in the local community, according to one parent. Pupils also make extremely positive contribution to their school community because of their excellent behaviour and the way they get on with each other.

The school sensitively helps pupils develop an understanding of right and wrong. In one lesson, for example, over-enthusiastic teamwork led to reinforcement of the importance of taking turns and playing fair. Assemblies communicate the school's values very effectively. Pupils develop very mature social skills and playtimes are characterised by a natural happy exuberance as they make use of the play equipment with their friends, often across the year groups. Pupils have a voice in the school through the school council and take this and other roles, such as 'playground friends' very seriously. Through the arts, explorations of other faiths and particularly because of the work the school does with its international links, pupils develop respect for others and gain a sense of the wider world which is also reflected in their care and concern for global issues through their charity work and recycling.

Over their time in school, pupils achieve well. Pupil numbers are relatively small and there are year-on-year variations in the composition and make-up of the year groups. Pupils get a good start to their education. They make good progress to reach standards at the end of the Reception class above expectations for their age. Standards at the end of Year 2 are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2007, national assessment results were exceptionally high in reading and writing. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and this is sustained in Years 3 and 4 so that they gain levels in mathematics, reading and writing above the expectations for their age - significantly so in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics has improved because of the school's work to improve pupils' problem solving. There is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Higher attaining pupils and pupils who have difficulties with their learning achieve well. The school prepares pupils extremely well for the next steps in their education given their attitudes to learning, enjoyment of school coupled with their academic skills.

The excellence of pupils' personal development is based upon strong features in teaching and the curriculum and in particular, the overall excellence of the school's systems for welfare

guidance and support. Staff have excellent relationships with pupils and demonstrate an extremely high level of care and commitment towards them. The strong informal communication systems with parents supplement formal procedures. Before-school and after-school care provide a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are cared for and supervised well; they enjoy the opportunity to play together and read or listen to music in a friendly atmosphere. The school monitors pupils' academic progress carefully and this means that it is able to target support effectively to those pupils who are finding aspects of learning difficult. The headteacher acts as co-ordinator for this provision and clearly has in-depth knowledge of all pupils. The school works very hard to include all pupils and to break down barriers to learning. The academic monitoring system is in the process of being further refined so that the information is easier to use to give staff an even more precise view of where pupils are. Safeguarding, safety routines and procedures are all securely in place. There are good links with appropriate specialist and other agencies to support pupils and enhance their learning.

Leadership and management are good overall. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the aspect of personal development. The headteacher leads the school extremely well and she has the confidence of pupils and parents. The school's manifest care and concern for all pupils and its inclusive ethos stems from her and extends to her care and valuing of staff. Because it is a small school, staff carry multiple responsibilities. There is strong teamwork and a sustained focus on improvement. The school has an extremely clear view of itself and very accurately identifies aspects needed for further improvement but these need sharper targeting. The school improvement plan is also nearing the end of its life. Currently, how the school judges the success of a particular initiative is not precisely defined or, where appropriate, quantified within the plan. Recent work on improving pupils' mathematical skills derived from detailed analysis of pupils' test papers has been effective. However, the plan does not indicate, for example, what this might mean in terms of improved pupils' achievement or the step-by-step process to reach the standards the school is aiming at.

The quality of teaching and learning is good, as reflected in the good progress pupils make. Teachers are experienced and skilled practitioners who manage the demands of mixed age classes well, a concern of a very small minority of parents. The school has identified rightly that, although marking is supportive, the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils requires further development.

Governance is good. Governors are supportive of the school and act as critical friends. Individuals take part in training and the governing body has undertaken self-evaluation leading to a change in the way they carry out school visits. This process could usefully be embedded into the cycle of governors' activities. This is a small school and finance is tight, which means that the headteacher and governors spend much time in sensitively juggling priorities. The school is seeking accreditation for its financial management. The school's leadership has good capacity to build further on the school's existing strengths and raise achievement even higher.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Excellent induction arrangements ensure children and their parents are very well prepared for their first days in school. There are also close links with the pre-school. This ensures that relationships are very positive and is a key factor in helping the children to settle so happily.

The EYFS leader has a good understanding of how young children learn. Leadership and management are good. The leader uses this knowledge well to plan an exciting curriculum,

which ensures children access all areas of learning through a good balance of teacher led, and child selected activities. Firmly established routines ensure that children are clear about the teacher's high expectations of them. Good use is made of both the indoor and the outdoor environment including a large covered area, which children have access to whatever the weather. Teaching is good and children make good progress in all areas of learning. It is a little slower in writing than in other areas, because on occasions there is not enough promotion of the skills children need to enable them to become consistently good writers. The school now plans to focus keenly on a 'daily dose' of the modelling of good writing skills to raise this to the levels attained in other areas.

Children behave extremely well and enjoy their learning a great deal, because teaching is supportive and encouraging, and this develops children's confidence and independence. Children achieve well so that by the end of the Reception year, attainment is above that typically found for this age in all areas of learning, although it is a little lower in writing. Pupils make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.

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

- Challenge pupils further by developing the quality of teachers' feedback.
- Ensuring that future school improvement planning includes well-defined targets and success criteria, quantified and linked to standards and achievement where appropriate.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

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

<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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

24 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Totternhoe Lower School, Totternhoe LU6 1RE

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed my stay very much. My particular thanks go to the six children who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to me.

One of the very exciting things about your school is the fact that you clearly enjoy it so much. Your behaviour around the school is extremely good. Playtimes look fun with plenty to do. I really wanted to have a go with a diabolo! You clearly get on very well with each other and the school is a very friendly place. It is good that you feel that you could turn to an adult if you were worried about something. Miss Robinson knows you all very well and keeps a very close eye on how well you are doing. All adults care a great deal about you and want you to do well. You make good progress in your lessons because teachers ensure that lessons are interesting. By the time you leave your reading, writing and mathematics skills are above those seen in many schools.

I asked Miss Robinson to look at two things with the teachers. The first was to build on the fact that you enjoy learning so much by making sure you know how to improve your work and you can challenge yourselves to do even better. The second thing I asked them to do was to make sure they know precisely when they are successful in what they are trying to do. Miss Robinson and the staff and governors are going to draw up a plan of action, which tells them what they are going to do to improve the school over the next year. One of the advantages about being very clear when they have achieved what they set out to do is that they can all give themselves a pat on the back when they have done it.

Sincere good wishes for your future school careers

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector