

Scott Lower School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109512 |
| Local Authority | Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 324974 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Julie Winyard 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.

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| Type of school | First |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 138 |
| 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 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Miss Dawn Herdman |
| Headteacher | Mrs Anita Barker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 September 2007 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Hawk Drive Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7JA |
| Telephone number | 01234 352630 |
| Fax number | 01234 211366 |

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| Age group | 4–9 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 January 2009 |
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Scott Lower School is a smaller than average first school with a larger proportion of boys than girls in most year groups. There are higher than average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language. There are smaller numbers of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and fewer pupils who are eligible for free school meals than is found in other schools nationally. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is broadly in line with national expectations. At the last section 5 inspection in September 2007, the school was given a Notice to Improve. At the monitoring inspection in May 2008, the school was judged to be making satisfactory progress with the key issues for improvement. The new headteacher was in post just before the last section 5 inspection. There has been considerable staff turbulence since the monitoring inspection with three new teachers joining the school in September and one in November. There have also been a number of changes in the governing body. There is currently one vacancy for a parent governor. The school has the following awards: Healthy Schools and Active Mark. There is a before and after school club, called 'Scotties', that is managed by the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Scott Lower School now offers a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and in accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. In the words of one parent, 'Mrs Barker is amazing! The children adore her and you can see she really cares about them. I am so pleased I kept my children here after the last inspection because of the rapid changes she has made for the better.' Inspection evidence supports this parent's view, which is also the view of the overwhelming majority of parents who replied to the parent questionnaire. The good leadership of the headteacher has ensured that required improvements have been made and the school has made good progress with all the key issues from the last inspection. A good governing body who know the school well because they are closely involved in monitoring school improvement ably support the headteacher. The school's self-evaluation is good. The role of middle leaders is underdeveloped due to the changes in teaching staff. However, there is evidence that teachers now in post are beginning to take action to improve standards in their subject. The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher, who is already having an impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning, has ensured that the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Teaching and learning overall across the school are satisfactory. Ensuring that all teaching is good is an area for development already included in the school's improvement plan. Standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 are above average and this is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. However, because of the changes in teaching staff over the last year and the previously inadequate teaching, pupils' progress remains satisfactory, particularly in boys' writing and in mathematics across the school. The curriculum is satisfactory and teachers use the literacy and numeracy strategies well. The school is just beginning to make appropriate links between subjects.

The care and support pupils receive are good and this has ensured that their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils not only know the school rules, they live them out in class and on the playground. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and considerate to each other and to adults. One school councillor said, 'Everybody is good in this school because we have four cool school rules!' Pupils are very enthusiastic and have an excellent understanding about living a healthy lifestyle. They make good food choices and the walking bus is very popular even on the coldest of days! They feel very safe in school and on the playground. 'There is no bullying here.' The school council were absolutely certain about this. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident in all lessons and attendance is good. Whilst pupils now have a greater understanding of learning targets and what they need to do to improve their work, there remain inconsistencies in the approach to assessment across the school and academic guidance is an area for development. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school, their teachers and their learning and these positive attitudes to learning, the good work of the senior leadership team and governors, and the support of parents is what have ensured the very rapid improvements made in the last year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress overall through the EYFS. Their personal, social and emotional development is good due to the good care and support they receive from the

dedicated staff team. Children work in a safe and secure environment and their welfare is of great importance and is promoted well. Their progress in communication, language and literacy is good because they have a good understanding and can use their knowledge of letters and sounds in practical activities. However, children make satisfactory progress in mathematical development, creative and physical development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world. This is due to an underdeveloped use of focused adult intervention in child-initiated activities. There is also a need to develop a better understanding of assessment criteria in these areas of learning.

The curriculum is good and there is a wide range of well-planned activities available including good use of the outside area. There is an appropriate balance between adult led and child-initiated activities. Leadership is satisfactory and the EYFS leader provides a very safe and happy environment for children to learn in. Planning is detailed and ensures all the areas of learning are included.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by accelerating rates of progress of boys in writing and all pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all consistently good or better.
- Ensure that teachers use information from assessment to plan effectively for pupils' future learning.
- Fully develop the role of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

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

Pupils start Year 1 with standards that are above national expectations in reading and writing. They continue to make satisfactory progress reaching standards that are above average by the end of Year 2. Progress in mathematics is also satisfactory although pupils start Year 1 with broadly average standards and have reached standards just above those expected nationally by the end of Year 2. Progress is currently satisfactory in Year 3 and Year 4. However, standards at the end of 2008 were below those expected nationally because of the legacy of underachievement due to previously inadequate teaching. The school's rigorous tracking and robust assessment data show that pupils are currently on track to achieve the challenging targets the school has set for them. This is having a good impact on further raising standards and is beginning to accelerate progress in boys' writing and mathematics across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good moral and social development is evident through their understanding of how to behave and in the good behaviour seen in classrooms, at lunchtime and on the playground. Pupils enjoy talking to each other and to visitors and mirror the school rules in their attitudes as well as their behaviour. 'We smile a lot because it makes everyone happy!' Good spiritual development is evident in moments of quiet reflection and in the pupils' excitement about

learning new things. 'I've been waiting for 'Mind and Body' in Science because I want to be a forensic anthropologist,' one Year 4 pupil explained. Pupils' good understanding of other cultures is developed through a range of curriculum work including celebrations of festivals linked to the different ethnic groups within the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through fund raising for national and local charities including the neonatal ward at the local hospital. The school council have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and carry these out well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education because of the improvement in their basic skills. They also learn how to work and play together collaboratively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A high proportion of good teaching was seen during the inspection some of which had outstanding features. However, due to the considerable changes in teaching staff, overall teaching is judged to be satisfactory. The headteacher's monitoring shows that teaching is not consistently good and sometimes there is a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching which is why pupils do not make as much progress as they could. In the best lessons seen learning objectives and success criteria are referred to at relevant points in the lesson and pupils' targets are used well to support good progress. The teacher has good subject knowledge and uses open ended questions that enable pupils to think things through for themselves and there is an appropriate level of challenge so that pupils at all levels, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, can achieve their best work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all National Curriculum requirements including a modern foreign language. The school has chosen French to fit with the local middle school. Children really enjoy their lessons and are starting to develop a satisfactory vocabulary; asking and responding to questions in French. The school is beginning to make appropriate links between subjects and pupils say they like the special theme days, for example the Chinese New Year and Eid. There is a good range of extra- curricular clubs including Lego club run by a parent, drama club, challenge club and a variety of sports clubs. The school makes very good use of its extended schools partnerships, for example with the football coaching at lunchtimes and the football and music curriculum input by specialist teachers who cover teachers' planning and preparation time. The school uses visitors to the school and educational visits well to enrich the curriculum. Information and communications technology (ICT) has improved due to the provision of new computers and also a focus on ensuring teachers' planning includes opportunities for ICT across the curriculum.

The before and after school club, 'Scotties,' has well planned activities including cookery and drama and is very popular with the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pupils receive good care and support. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place. Health and safety procedures are in place and reflect the school community's concern for the welfare

and well-being of pupils. All school procedures also apply to 'Scotties'. Parents are very impressed with the high level of care in the school and are very pleased that teachers take pupils out to them every day after school. They value the opportunity this gives for informal discussion about behaviour and learning. Teaching assistants are well trained and are used effectively in lessons and in withdrawal groups helping to ensure pupils make better progress. For example, each teaching assistant has a communication folder where they write detailed notes so that the teacher knows about pupils' learning and can plan the next steps. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and appropriate targets are set by teachers in the individual education plans. Pupils have copies of these in 'childspeak' so that they know exactly how to improve their work and behaviour. It is because of this and the good support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants that they make good progress. However, academic guidance is not so well developed for all pupils and is not yet consistent through the school. There is some marking that gives positive comments but it does not tell pupils what they need to do next to make their work even better. This slows pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has worked tenaciously and tirelessly to make necessary improvements since the last inspection. She has implemented rigorous half-termly assessments. All teachers are involved with these and their accuracy has been overseen by expert consultants. These assessments are followed closely by pupil progress meetings where teachers are held to account for the progress their pupils are making. The Governors' School Improvement Group meets every two weeks to monitor progress and discuss the outcomes of their regular visits to the school. They have a detailed and rigorous action plan and are effective at holding the school to account. For example, after one visit a governor noted that pupils did not know their learning targets. He raised this with the headteacher and on his return later that term, the pupils were much clearer about what they had to learn in order to improve their work. The leadership of middle managers is currently underdeveloped because of the number of changes in staff over the last year. However, teachers have now received training about what is expected for this role and have started work on writing action plans for their subjects. Community cohesion within the school and local community is good but has yet to be developed for the wider United Kingdom and global communities. The school has developed very effective partnerships with external agencies and the local authority has supported the school well through targeted professional development for all staff and through input from a range of specialists.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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 | 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

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 | 2 |
| 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? | 3 |
| 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 | 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**

15 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Scott Lower School, Bedford, MK41 7JA

Thank you very much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I visited your school. It was great to see everyone looking so bright and cheerful. The school council explained that one of your rules is 'We smile at each other' and I saw this happening a lot during my visit. It certainly made me feel happy to be in your school. A special thank you to the school council for giving up their lunch break to answer all my questions and to the Year 4 boy who showed me round the playground and helped me to understand exactly how the different areas are used.

I was very impressed with how well you work together in lessons and play together on the playground. It was great to see some pupils setting themselves some very challenging work in a mathematics lesson about Venn diagrams. I really enjoyed my visit to the Early Years Foundation Stage and was very pleased to have my name ticked on the register by one boy and to see how well a girl was able to add quite large numbers for her age.

Your teachers are working very hard to make your lessons interesting and to help you make progress. There are a number of ways that the school could make this even better and you can help them to do this. First I have asked that the school helps boys to make better progress with their writing and that everyone works even harder to develop their skills and understanding in mathematics. Second, I have asked teachers to make sure that they do their best teaching in every lesson so that you know exactly what you are learning and why this is important. Third, I have asked the school to make sure that when your work is marked you know exactly what to do to improve and that you are given time in lessons to do this. Finally, I have asked that the school ensures that you do your best learning in every subject.

Thank you again for lots of lovely smiles that certainly made me feel happy to be at Scott Lower School.

With every good wish for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector