

Linslade Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109515
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	324975
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	221
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	Dr Richard Carter
Headteacher	Mrs Hazel Farlam
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leopold Road Linslade Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 2QU
Telephone number	01525 372085
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school in which most children are White British and a very small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The main languages spoken at home, apart from English, are Portuguese, Czech and Polish. A below average proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there are currently none who require statements for their needs. Children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is typical for their age. The school has recently received the Healthy Schools award.

A pre-school and a breakfast and after-school club are situated on the same site. Both are run privately and inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which has improved tremendously since it was last inspected three years ago. It evaluates its provision effectively and is well led and managed. The school is very much a part of the community and it contributes effectively to cohesive relationships between the two. It is held in high regard by parents who sum up their views in comments such as: 'The school has an excellent community spirit' and, 'It is a very caring school and wonderful learning environment.'

From starting points that are similar to those in most other schools, children make good progress in the EYFS and build successfully on learning in Years 1 to 4. Consequently, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 4, with the majority of children attaining Level 3 in the optional tests and a significant proportion attaining the higher Level 4. Standards have held steady at the end of Year 2 over the last three years and were above average in 2008, with many attaining higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has accurately identified writing and mathematics as areas upon which to focus further to meet its challenging targets. It is rightly developing its use of assessment for learning to pinpoint progress and identify clear targets to help children know how well they are doing and to guide their work.

Children enjoy learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand right and wrong, and respect the views of others. Personal development and well-being are good, and children are keen to attend school. They have excellent knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy, and they make important contributions to the school community by willingly taking on responsibilities such as school councillors, friendship buddies and fruit and vegetable monitors. These tasks and their good achievement academically help to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. The quality of teaching is good overall. Classrooms are clean and colourful places in which to learn and a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and visits enhances the well-planned curriculum. The school cares for, guides and supports children closely, and maintains good partnerships with parents, local schools and external agencies.

Good leadership and management are central to the school. The headteacher provides excellent direction for future development and is exceedingly well supported by the deputy headteacher. They, and the senior leadership team, share a commitment to making the school even better, while recognising that there is still more to be done to delegate responsibilities more evenly amongst staff. Key governors keep a careful check on how well the school is doing and are closely involved in evaluating the provision. The weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been tackled successfully and the school has a good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are cared for well in the Nursery and Reception classes and their welfare has a high priority. Adults make sure that the welcoming, friendly environment enables children to settle happily and contentedly. As a result, children participate willingly in activities and enjoy coming to school. The few with language or learning needs are integrated well with others, and all are effectively supported by staff. Children achieve well and reach the expected goals in all areas of learning by the time they move on to Year 1. Adults promote children's personal, social and

emotional skills well and encourage them to share and take turns when playing with others. They check children's progress often to see how well they are doing and identify where additional support is needed for those who find learning hard or help the few who learn English as an additional language.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff work together as an excellent team to provide plenty of exciting things for the children to do. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection that include a greater focus on providing a more balanced curriculum, and the provision is currently led and managed well. Although somewhat restricted by the accommodation, the staff make sure that the children have a wide range of learning opportunities to help them develop their skills. Teaching focuses well on increasing children's communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills through formal adult-led activities, while teaching assistants provide very good support for individual children. Learning and development is based on practical tasks to promote children's physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world through a good mix of organised tasks indoors and free-play outdoor activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of assessment to include ways of helping children to become involved in checking their own work and that of their peers.
- Share out the roles of the subject leaders more evenly so that more teachers can become involved in management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well and make good progress. The results of the 2008 teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 confirm that they attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, and many reach the higher Level 3. Standards have remained steadily above average in recent years.

At Key Stage 2, children keep up the good progress so that by the end of Year 4, they attain standards that are above the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Although there were a few disparities in the 2008 results, overall, children of all abilities do well, including those with language and learning needs and the most able. The school works hard to drive up standards even further in writing and mathematics and eradicate any differences in the achievement of various groups or between boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good awareness of the range of cultures represented in their own society; for instance, through visits to different places of worship in Bedford. They have an excellent awareness of the need to stay healthy through eating nutritious food and regular opportunities for dance and physical exercise. Children feel safe in school and are confident that there are adults to whom they can turn if they are in difficulty. They enjoy school greatly and appreciate the wide range of clubs and other activities it provides. Behaviour is good. A small minority of children do not always behave appropriately and need occasional reminders of the school's expectations, but other children are confident that any misbehaviour will be dealt with promptly. Children are involved fully in

their own and the wider community through the school council and also through fund-raising activities, including raising money to support a school in Uganda. They willingly take on responsibilities around the school; older children are very happy to help with younger ones. They are developing well the skills they need for later life and attendance is above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality teaching impacts significantly on children's learning and helps them do well. Teaching is sometimes outstanding when challenging activities capture children's interest and inspire them. For example, they thoroughly enjoyed thinking up alliterations like 'sticky, steamy smoke' and similes such as 'mountain lions creeping along' through 'rivers like chocolate sauce' to describe the journey of a train. Warm relationships between kindly adults and their classes motivate learning, and teachers make good use of computers and whiteboards to make learning interesting. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to learning because they are deployed closely to ensure that children of different abilities receive the right levels of support. Teachers mark and assess progress effectively, and children are encouraged to do well through positive written comments in their books, although they are not yet involved fully in helping to assess their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad curriculum which meets the needs of different groups of children well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more able. Provision for teaching the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is good. Planning is monitored well by the subject leaders and deputy headteacher, and staff are currently developing strategies to identify different learning styles as well as more creative links between different areas of the curriculum. A strong programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education links in with the monthly themes for assemblies although, at times, there are not enough opportunities for children to reflect on the world around them. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and other activities, both sporting and cultural, which reflect the interests of the children. These include several clubs for French, which is also taught as a modern foreign language to children in Years 3 and 4. Learning is also enriched by visits, for instance, to the National Gallery and Bedford Museum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school meets all the requirements for the safeguarding of children. It carries out thorough risk assessments on activities within and outside school. Child protection procedures are in place. Adults in the school know the children very well and the pastoral support they provide is good. The school has good links with the pre-school and after school clubs that extend the pupils' learning. There is good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who need help with their behaviour, both in lessons and in small nurture groups. There is also good support for those who have particular gifts or talents. Academic guidance is good. Children throughout the school know their targets in English and mathematics through the imaginative systems of 'Reach for the Stars' and 'Rocking Rockets'. Children say that they

understand how well they are achieving, but the school has identified the need to develop the use of peer assessment by children and the systems for moderating teachers' judgements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's good leadership and management are pivotal to the warm, welcoming ethos of the school and the good achievement of the children. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher who has quickly established good assessment procedures and keeps a careful check on children's progress. Together, they have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and an excellent vision for the way it will develop. The office staff contribute much to the efficient running of the school and they provide a cheery welcome to all who enter. The school evaluates its performance effectively and uses the information to formulate suitable priorities and a good school development plan. Subject leadership has improved well since the last inspection and is now good. However, there is still an imbalance of responsibilities, with too much falling on the shoulders of the headteacher. Governors play an influential role in evaluating provision and are regular visitors to the school, although several are new and have yet to be allocated suitable areas of responsibility. Links with parents are good and the school has an effective strategy that has ensured that it contributes well to community cohesion, both locally and internationally.

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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?	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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?	2

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	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 Children

Inspection of Linslade Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2QU

Thank you for being so helpful and making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

We think you go to a good school. You achieve well and reach above average standards by the time you leave at the end of Year 4. It was good to hear how much you like coming to school and really enjoy learning. You say that you are happy in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried. You behave well and you know a lot about keeping healthy and safe. Those of you involved in the school council take your responsibilities seriously. The teaching is good in your school and staff take good care of you and keep you safe. They make sure that your lessons are interesting and that there are plenty of things to do in the lunchtime, after-school clubs and other activities.

To make your school even better we have asked your teachers to improve the way they check on how well you are doing. We have also asked the headteacher to share out some of the jobs she does so that other teachers can learn to become leaders too. Mrs Farlam, the staff and governors all want the school to become even better and I hope that you will play your part by continuing to work hard.

I wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector