

# Hawthorn Park Lower School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109524
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	324977
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Henderson

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	286
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 Rick Vernon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lindsey Johnson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 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>	Parkside Drive Houghton Regis Dunstable Bedfordshire LU5 5QN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 863859
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 863859

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 December 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	324977

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average lower school. Children come from nearby housing estates, comprising a mix of local authority, private and housing association properties. This is an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds is broadly average. A few speak English as an additional language. There is high level of pupil mobility. The number of pupils who find learning more difficult is higher than most schools of this size, particularly those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The attainment of most children starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is very low. The school is part of a local extended school trust and runs breakfast and after-school clubs. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The many positive comments given by pupils and parents, for example: 'I can't praise the school enough!' and 'a happy and well run school', clearly show how highly this school is valued. They reflect that it is, indeed, a good school. Several parents spoken to during the inspection particularly praised the high quality of care and support given to their children. As a result, pupils achieve well as they feel happy, enjoy learning and benefit from effective teaching and a good range of learning opportunities. The good leadership and management, as shown by the purposeful, energetic lead given by the headteacher, focus consistently on improving pupils' achievement. She has encouraged other staff to contribute to an effective team approach that fully involves a supportive and increasingly influential governing body. The school has an accurate picture of how well the pupils are doing, for example, by establishing good procedures to track the progress of individuals and groups. These are used well to set challenging targets for each year group, and to improve the achievement of any pupils who are not maintaining the progress expected in English or mathematics.

Children benefit from a good start in the EYFS. This is built on effectively in Years 1 and 2 as teaching is good and, occasionally, outstanding. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain standards that are broadly average, although there are some yearly variations, especially in mathematics. Progress continues to be generally good in Years 3 and 4 because of the consistently good teaching and pupils' desire to learn and achieve well. Progress is good for the high proportion of pupils who find learning difficult because of the consistently very good support from teachers and teaching assistants. Most Year 4 pupils attain the standards expected nationally for their age in English, mathematics and science. An increasing proportion attain above expected levels, for example, in writing because of the effective whole-school approach to targeting literacy skills. Pupils' number skills and knowledge are improving, but they have weaknesses in using these skills to solve problems and to carry out mathematical investigations.

Pupils' good personal development is a key factor in supporting their achievement. They speak enthusiastically about their school and most behave well in and out of lessons. They understand how to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. Year 4 pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, being play-leaders for younger pupils at lunchtimes. School councillors talk proudly about their work and contribute well to improving the school. The staff's caring approach is clearly reflected in the way they work hard to ensure that every pupil is happy, secure and ready to learn. All staff provide very good personal care and support, particularly for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Some teachers and teaching assistants help pupils to improve their work by the effective use of a range of strategies, such as marking ladders and group targets, although these are not equally effective in every class.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because of the effective procedures to identify what is working well and what needs improving. The headteacher, her deputy and key subject leaders work hard to monitor how teaching helps pupils to learn. Some teachers, particularly those working with the younger pupils, are very successful in encouraging pupils to become fully involved in and increasingly responsible for their own learning. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and set challenging activities for them to improve their skills and knowledge within a good curriculum. This process raises pupils' self-esteem and helps them to gain a better understanding of their strengths and areas that they need to improve. Such initiatives are helping to raise standards, although are not used consistently, particularly with older pupils.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in improving pupils' writing skills. An effective staff team, led by the strong drive of the headteacher and senior management, uses good assessment procedures to focus closely on achievement, and ensure that all pupils are fully included and achieve equally well. The school is well placed to continue to improve the education it provides and to raise standards further.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Effective educational provision helps children to make good progress overall, and outstanding progress in personal, social and emotional, and creative development. Children are happy, well behaved and like coming to school. All staff are excellent in promoting children's welfare and raising their self-esteem through praise and encouragement. Children learn to share, take turns, listen and concentrate. They develop their independence through making choices and taking responsibility. They are keen to learn, and explain confidently to visitors what they are learning. All staff use assessment effectively to plan the next stages of children's learning and take actions to improve any weaker areas. They use the environment well; for example, after enjoying a story about 'The Hungry Caterpillar' they went outside to look at leaves through magnifying glasses and wrote about mini-beasts. Children develop their skills successfully through a wide range of practical activities, many of which link well to a theme or story to support effective learning. Staff work closely as a team, and the ratio of adults to children is good. They welcome parents and encourage their involvement in their children's learning. There is a good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those of the children's own choosing, although staff do not always question children consistently to extend their thinking and language skills.

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

- Give pupils, especially those in Years 3 and 4, more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' investigational and problem-solving skills.
- Make fully consistent the good practice that ensures pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of wide-ranging ability and from all backgrounds achieve well throughout the school. They attain average standards overall, although high levels of mobility occasionally lead to variations in test results. Standards generally reflect the improving trend in Year 2 national test results. Current school assessments, particularly of writing, accurately show the very successful use of new literacy resources to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of language. Good teaching helps pupils to attain average standards in mathematics, although they do not always use their skills accurately in investigational activities or to solve number problems. The very effective partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is a significant factor in helping the high proportion of pupils who find learning difficult to make good progress. Some, for example, those with speech and communication difficulties, make excellent progress towards their particular individual targets. A good range of activities encourages pupils' participation and they achieve well in other subjects, particularly physical education and information and communication technology (ICT).

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has a strong inclusive ethos, which celebrates the diversity of its community and is focussed on meeting the needs of all. Pupils have pride in their school. They feel valued, well cared for and know how to stay safe. They enjoy lessons and the wide range of activities. Behaviour is good, and pupils have positive attitudes towards one another and to learning. They work well together. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils work with the local community and with partner schools in the Chiltern Learning Community, for example, to enhance their understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They successfully prepare for adult life through work with Youth Enterprise and regular visits from the Bedfordshire Life Bus. Attendance is currently broadly average and the school works very hard to encourage better attendance from the very small number of persistent absentees.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching makes good use of assessment to match learning activities to the range of pupils' needs. Staff manage their classes very well and show they care about them. Pupils respond very positively and are keen to learn. There are excellent examples of using ICT to support teaching and learning, for example, use of the interactive whiteboard to investigate the differences between old and new teddies. Teaching then challenges pupils to work independently for an extended period, producing some excellent work. Where teachers encourage pupils to actively participate in their learning and regularly assess themselves and each other, they make very good progress. Although this practice is evident in many lessons, it is not applied consistently enough to help all pupils become more effective, independent learners. Teachers assess pupils' work constantly and use class targets effectively to help all groups of learners to make good progress, although some individuals are not fully aware of the targets that have been set for them.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum develops pupils' skills through cross-curricular topics and gives them a good range of opportunities for writing. The use of ICT is a particular strength and extends pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors, and the local community and school grounds are used effectively as learning resources. Life-skills, such as personal safety and drugs-prevention, feature strongly. Breakfast, after-school and other clubs are well-supported. Pupils enjoy working with local schools in sport, ICT and music. They learn about other cultures and faiths, for example on themed days, and enjoy learning Spanish. The limited opportunities for problem-solving challenges in mathematics and for additional creative activities within topics are being developed.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff work hard to ensure that every pupil is well looked after. Child-protection procedures are fully in place, and risk assessments are carried out for all relevant activities. Pupils know what

to do if they feel bullied. There are clear playground rules to encourage pupils to show respect and play well together. Very good emotional care is provided for pupils through an extensive range of support systems. These involve effective links with external agencies, counselling and encouraging a close partnership between the school and parents. There is very good support from the education welfare officer and staff make effective use of awards to encourage pupils to maintain regular attendance. Staff show particular concern for enhancing pupils' self-esteem, for example, in the social and pastoral room. This contributes considerably to helping pupils to learn. Some teachers guide pupils very successfully to improve their work, for example, in use of marking ladders and constructive written comments, although these practices are not used to full effect in all classes.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The energetic, high-profile leadership of the headteacher gives a strong sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school. This is valued by parents - a typical comment stated '... a very realistic and practical headteacher, who remains sensitive and caring to her pupils'. She is supported well by a united team of staff and a purposeful, hard-working group of governors. Together they have established a caring school community in which pupils have a strong sense of belonging. Pupils from all backgrounds are included fully, and staff are particularly effective in raising pupils' self-esteem and encouraging them to contribute their different ideas and beliefs to draw the community together. Pupils' understanding of the wider community is enhanced successfully through links with schools in Murcia and Australia as part of its application to gain international-school status. Governance is good, and an influential leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their evaluation leads to the school development plan, which presents clear direction for improvement and shows how actions to tackle weaknesses will be measured. This process is raising standards, for example in writing, and is evidence of the school's good capacity to improve.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
--	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

---

<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>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

<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?	2

## 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?	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**

8 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hawthorn Park Lower School, Houghton Regis, LU5 5QN

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with your parents, you think that it is a good school - we agree.

We were pleased to see how well you get on together and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how they are helping to improve the school. I would like to say special thanks to the group of Year 4 pupils I talked to who told me all about life at Hawthorn Park.

You told us that you learn a lot in school and enjoy your work, especially the many extra-curricular activities. You are all making good progress in your lessons. This is because your teachers make lessons interesting and you try hard to do what your teachers ask. Mrs Johnson and her staff are trying to help you learn as well as possible and are keeping careful checks on your progress, especially in English and mathematics.

You are keen to try to improve your work, particularly in literacy and numeracy. For some of you, teachers' marking contains suggestions of ways to improve your work and some of them use other helpful ways to make your work better. We have asked that all of you should benefit from this type of guidance. Some of the younger children clearly enjoyed the lessons when teachers gave them more responsibility for developing their learning. We have asked that more of you, especially older children, are given these opportunities. We have also asked your teachers to help you to use your improving number skills in mathematical investigations and to solve number problems - I know that you will enjoy this and will work hard to improve your work.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Best wishes

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector