

Downside Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109567
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	324981
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Killman HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Talat Hafiz
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 February 2006
School address	Chaul End Lane Luton LU4 8EZ
Telephone number	01582593460
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at books and documents including analyses of all 42 completed parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the school helps groups of pupils, who are not achieving as well as others, to catch up
- whether pupils recognise their successes and know how to improve their work
- how the school supports staff in continuously improving their teaching skills
- how effectively leaders and managers check the quality of the school's work and use the information to plan for future improvements.

Information about the school

Since the last inspection pupil numbers have risen by almost a third. As a result, some pupils are taught in temporary buildings and additional teachers, support assistants and administrative staff have been employed. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. When pupils start school, their attainment is well below expectations. The school manages the Children's Centre that provides the community with access to extended services. In addition, there is onsite childcare which is managed by an external provider. This is inspected separately.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	324	Larger than average
Free school meals	23.4%	Above average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	18.7%	Average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	100%	Well above average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	89.8%	Well above average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0.7%	Below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well academically and make good progress in their personal development. It gives extensive consideration to the needs of the community. This is evident in the good teaching and curriculum for pupils from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, many of whom speak English as an additional language. Standards are rising steadily especially in reading and mathematics. This shows that it has good capacity to improve, particularly the standards in writing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all pupils' attainment in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities to practice writing in all subjects and areas of learning
 - ensuring a higher level of challenge in writing tasks for the most able learners.
- Involve pupils more in their learning by:
 - helping them to understand their targets
 - showing them what to do to reach the next level.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching that leads to rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that pupils' learning is the main focus in monitoring and evaluating teaching
 - sharing examples of excellent practice in teaching and learning.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Pupils' achievement is good. The school is successful in steadily moving pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics closer to national averages. Standards are now broadly average and pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next step in their education. The pupils' personal development is good although they do not always have enough opportunity to demonstrate responsibility and think for themselves. The school's success in achieving improvement relates to the following key features.

- The school has worked hard to promote the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. Most parents are keeping absence to a minimum. As a result, attendance is rising.
- Behaviour is good because staff expect it. Pupils know right from wrong and what to do if someone is unkind to them. Adults intervene quickly to resolve conflict. Parents are fully informed and if necessary family workers visit them at home to ensure that they work successfully in partnership. Exclusions are rare.
- The pupils and their parents say that they are happy learners, that they enjoy school and know how to stay safe. This is because the school meets their varying needs and abilities well.
- Since the last inspection, the school has focused on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills and this has led to better progress in all subjects. Pupils in the early stages of learning English are able to play a full part in lessons, often supported very proficiently by bilingual staff.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school’s work

Good quality teaching and curricular provision ensures that pupils’ make good progress. The following are typical features of the school.

- Good relationships and teamwork, because teachers, support staff and pupils work harmoniously ensuring that learning time is used productively. The adults are good role models for pupils to mimic. They are calm, softly spoken and offer instant praise expertly to reinforce good behaviour.
- Teachers’ good subject knowledge lends confidence to their teaching styles, which engage learners and helps them to relate their learning to every day life. For example, in religious education pupils examine artefacts from their own and others’ religions and listen to Christmas music and dress up in costume. As a result, they are able to make good connections between their own and other religious festivals.
- Pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons but they are not always prompted to think about their individual targets.
- Effective curriculum planning ensures pupils’ needs, abilities and interests are taken fully into account and build on what they already know and can do.
- Good extra-curricular provision, such as visits to places of interest and clubs, ensures that pupils have much to look forward to and enjoy.
- Resources to support learning are used effectively, particularly the electronic whiteboards.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to evaluate their success during lessons. Some teachers provide a guide so that they can measure their success, but this is not yet consistent.
- Teachers do not consistently suggest how pupils might improve their work, especially in their marking of pupils’ work.
- Teachers miss opportunities to challenge and engage pupils in purposeful writing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

- The headteacher and other senior leaders fulfil their roles effectively. They work as a harmonious team always striving for improvement and ensuring that all staff work towards common goals to provide good quality education and care for all pupils. The headteacher and governors have taken decisive action in expanding the leadership team and appointing effective new staff to share the workload in an expanding school.

- The leadership team makes regular checks on all aspects of the school's work. It uses the information effectively to plan for future improvements. However, school leaders do not always focus strongly enough on learning when they make observations of teaching. As a result, their judgements are sometimes generous and they are not always able to guide teachers towards the good or outstanding qualities of teaching that would lead to improving their skills.
- The senior leaders make good use of data to check that pupils are making sufficient progress and working towards achieving challenging targets.
- The headteacher ensures that the Children's Centre responds to the needs of the community by securing strong links with extended services.
- Subject leaders have good subject knowledge. They check regularly to ensure that their subjects are taught well and that standards continue to rise. They select appropriate actions to promote pupils' achievement.
- Governance is satisfactory. At the time of the inspection, the governing body's statutory duty to ensure that safeguarding procedures are in place was fulfilled. Governors are trained and provided with the right information so that they can ask challenging questions. They are beginning to fulfil their role as critical friends. The governing body is managing the school's expansion successfully.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children start school well. The new EYFS leader is using her specialist expertise and knowledge to good effect to promote good practice in these classes. Personal development is nurtured effectively so that children develop as happy and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy school because teachers provide tempting play activities that excite and capture interest inside the classroom and outdoors. The teachers are making satisfactory use of the improved assessment system to identify the needs of individuals and to plan more effectively for their next steps in learning. Nonetheless, opportunities are missed to encourage children to write, especially those that are most capable. Usually though, adults provide sensitive and timely support. Many children benefit from the skilful help that bilingual staff provide. This adds to their sense of security and gives them confidence to achieve in English as well as their home language.

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 the children in the EYFS promoted?*	2
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	2

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

Around 12% of parents returned the questionnaires. Of these, most parents indicated that they are entirely satisfied with the quality of education and care that their child receives. One parent commented, 'The school is run efficiently. The staff are always available to discuss matters with us.' Some parents attending a parent class to develop their numeracy skills and to learn how they can help their child at school were extremely pleased to have this opportunity. Nonetheless a very small minority of parents had reservations about the school's effectiveness in preparing their child for transfer, the quality of support their child receives and the way the school communicates with them. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these views. Support for all pupils and especially those with additional learning or language needs was effective in all lessons seen by inspectors. Satisfactory links exist between the pre-school and the junior school to ensure pupils' smooth transition from one setting to the next. The school communicates very effectively with parents. Many parents appreciate the regular access they have to staff to discuss any concerns.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Downside Infant School, Luton, LU4 8EZ

Thank you for being very helpful when inspectors visited your school to see how well you are learning. We were very impressed with your good behaviour and willingness to talk to us about the school. We decided that your school is good and here are some of the reasons why.

- You learn quickly because the teachers and other staff are good at their jobs.
- Those of you who speak languages other than English soon become bilingual – just like many of the adults in school who help you.
- You are getting better at reading and mathematics. Your writing is improving too, but not quite as fast.
- Your behaviour is good, you get on well with one another and you enjoy coming to school.

To make your school even better we have asked the teachers to:

- make sure that you get plenty of practice in writing
- help you to understand how you can improve your work
- check to see how much you are learning in class and tell each other when they see excellent teaching.

The school and your families want you to do well. You can help too by doing your best and trying hard to become good writers.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector

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