

Caldecote Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109596
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	324984
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	John Williams 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.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	62
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	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Frank Coleman
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Dury
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Manor Place Upper Caldecote Bedfordshire SG18 9DA
Telephone number	01767316206
Fax number	

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Caldecote Voluntary Controlled Lower School is a small village school of 62 pupils, which is around half its capacity. Fifteen of those pupils are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Children come from a range of home backgrounds; the number of families claiming free school meals is well below average and almost all children are White British. There are a small number of Roma traveller children on roll. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Caldecote Lower School is a good school. A strong Christian ethos of care and looking after the welfare of pupils pervades much of everything that goes on. This is a small school where each teacher takes on many responsibilities, often in their own time, in order to help pupils make better progress. Leadership and management have improved from the time of the last inspection and are now good. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is, for example, much better use of assessment data, more able pupils are being challenged and marking is used well to tell pupils what they need to do next in order to improve. Parents are mostly very supportive of the school, as one put it, 'The school has been a great support for both me and my child.' However, recent events associated with elections to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have spoilt some relationships with the community.

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers try hard to engage all pupils and teaching assistants provide good support. Interactive whiteboards are used well but the pace of some lessons is slow when pupils are using complicated software. Relationships between all adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are excellent. Their behaviour and response to adults and each other is always good. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school and it is clear that they enjoy what they are doing. Consequently attendance is excellent. Pupils participate fully in lessons and in the opportunities offered during out of school activities. They are taught how to stay safe and healthy, eat sensible food and take part in physical activity. The quality of food on offer at lunchtimes is very good and the whole lunchtime experience is effective in promoting pupils' social development. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving.

Attainment when children begin school in the EYFS is at the levels expected for their age. Standards by the end of Year 2 are in line with or a little above national average. By the time they leave, at the end of Year 4, they attain standards that are above national average. Progress and achievement from entering to leaving school is good.

Pupils' personal development is good, though without a school council pupils do not have much formal opportunity to have a say in what happens at the school. There are no exclusions and the school prides itself on being inclusive in the way it deals with all pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good and enhanced by strong church links. The care and welfare provided for pupils is outstanding and at the heart of the way the school operates.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents are pleased with the start their children receive in the EYFS. One wrote: 'My child has only been at the school a few weeks and so far I am very impressed.' Children make good progress through the EYFS and virtually all meet the early learning goals, set for them nationally, by the beginning of Year 1. Teaching is good and children enjoy what they are doing. Though early in the term, children were happily joining in all the activities on offer and were making decisions about what they wanted to do. For example, they had great fun putting different objects in a tub of water to see which would float or in describing the different characteristics of the bread dough they had been making. Children learn to work and play together well. They behave well and develop good social relationships with each other and with adults in an exceptionally caring environment where their welfare is a high priority. Good leadership of the EYFS ensures that activities meet the children's needs. The new EYFS curriculum is firmly in

place. Although children do not have access to outside covered areas, the leader has identified this as an issue and plans are in place to resolve this in the near future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take more account of the pupil voice in the school to identify and meet their needs.
- Increase the pace of lessons when pupils are using the computers as part of their learning in other subjects.
- Address the disquiet caused by recent elections to the PTA.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils begin school with standards that are mostly at the expectation for their age. Children in the EYFS progress well, achieving average standards in most of the early learning goals but above average in their social and emotional development. Virtually all pupils attain the nationally expected levels by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 4 progress overall has been good and pupils attain above the expected levels for their age. Overall achievement and standards are therefore good.

Pupils are good learners who listen well and have very good speaking skills. The school caters well for the few pupils who find learning difficult. They make good progress. Those with special gifts and talents are identified and, where appropriate, supported with some extra activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, get on well together and their behaviour is good in lessons and at other times. Attendance is excellent. Pupils treat one another with kindness and respect and they play well together. Bullying is very rare and pupils are confident that adults will deal quickly with any problems. Pupils' spiritual development is good due to the underpinning Christian ethos that pervades the school. Teachers take opportunities to develop awe and wonder with even the most simple artefacts. Social development is excellent; moral and cultural development is good and developed well through an understanding of different faiths. Teachers are careful to celebrate achievements to enhance self-esteem. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise which the school supports by providing good quality food and activities. They willingly take on responsibilities such as register monitors but there is less formal opportunity for them to have a voice in the school because the school council has ceased to operate although there are plans to reinstate this quickly. Pupils are building a good foundation for later life and the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, which reassures pupils that their contributions will be welcomed and valued. Pupils also receive good one-to-one support and help from teaching assistants. Teachers are very caring of their pupils and encourage everyone to take part. Pupils enjoy lessons because the work is pitched at the right level to engage and interest them. In one lesson, for example, a number square that sets out numbers one to a hundred was used very imaginatively and effectively to develop pupils' counting skills. Teachers

are very experienced at planning for mixed-age classes and do it well. They have a sound knowledge of the subject they are teaching and this makes it possible for them to pose challenging tasks and questions. The use of interactive white boards is good and they effectively support teaching. However, where pupils use computers to learn aspects of other subjects, the pace of learning is slow. This is because they need too much help to work the software that, in itself, is not always best for the task. Marking and comments on pupils' work are much improved from the time of the last inspection and provide good advice. For example, in one lesson the teacher carefully used her comments on a pupils' book to emphasis a point that would help the pupil improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the national requirements and includes French in Key Stage 2. Those who find learning difficult make good progress because the curriculum is matched to their needs. Staff understand well how to plan for literacy and numeracy lessons in mixed-age classes. This is having a good impact on pupils' future economic well-being. Cross-curricular links take place as part of good teaching, though the school has yet to adopt any thematic or creative curriculum approaches. There are clubs and activities that augment the curriculum. Visits support pupils' learning well. The school is working towards achieving Healthy School status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Caldecote Lower School is an extremely caring school. All staff put pupils' care and welfare as the highest priority. The lunchtime arrangements are effective because of the good liaison between lunchtime supervisors, catering staff and teachers. All procedures for safeguarding pupils and for child protection are in place. There are good procedures for protecting and supporting vulnerable pupils and thorough training has taken place for a number of staff. In this small school, excellent informal tracking ensures that teachers are able to identify pupils who are not making the expected progress and take action to support them. These measures are augmented by regular formal reviews of progress. Pupils throughout the school evaluate their own work very effectively and are working towards evaluating each other's. They have targets that make it clear to them what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because there has been an improvement in all aspects of the school identified as weak at the last inspection three years ago. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and, when given the opportunity, challenge as well as support the school. The headteacher has provided effective leadership and direction in order to improve pupils' achievements and address issues from the last inspection. However, community cohesion is currently suffering because of a recent unfortunate issue arising from the Parent Teacher Association.

Finances are used well to promote improvement in the play areas and to raise the standards pupils' attain. For example, extra staffing is provided so that the mixed Years 1 and 2 class can be divided into separate year groups for literacy and mathematics. Although improvement

planning is sound, it is not linked well to formal self-evaluation. Even so, everyone in the school knows what needs to be done to improve further and they are fully committed to improvement. The school demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

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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?	3
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?	1
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	1

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

17 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Caldecote Lower School, Upper Caldecote, SG18 9DA

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you.

Caldecote Lower School is a good school. You seem to enjoy the lessons and your attendance is excellent. Well done! You get off to a good start when you begin in the Early Years class as the staff there take very good care of you. In fact, Ms Dury, the teachers and all the staff in the school take really good care of you and look after you well. You often reach above the expected standards in English, mathematics and science and are making good progress, but I have asked the school to improve this further when you are using computers by making it easier for you to 'get going' on your work. I also know you want to have more say in what you want from the school and I am glad that you will, by the time you read this letter, have had an assembly about re-starting the school council to help you do this.

The school has improved since its last inspection and I know that many of your parents are very happy with it. However, some recent difficulties in the PTA have upset some of them, so we have asked the school to help them sort this out.

I hope you will continue to enjoy and do well at Caldecote Lower School.

Yours faithfully

John Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector