

Lavendon School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110242
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325115
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	87
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	Mrs Sue Usher
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Howe
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Street Lavendon Olney MK46 4HA
Telephone number	01234 712680
Fax number	01234 714563

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. They investigated the extent to which current pupils are on track to reach their targets and what this says about current standards and achievement; the school's evidence to support its view that it provides outstanding care, guidance and support; and how well staff cater for mixed-age and mixed-ability classes. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires and discussions with the headteacher, staff, two governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The vast majority of pupils at this small school are of White British heritage and none is learning English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of pupils have been identified with learning difficulties and the proportion in receipt of a statement of special educational need is well above average. Their needs relate largely to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autism. A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. More pupils than usual join or leave the school at other than the usual times. About one in five pupils live outside the school's designated catchment area. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate Foundation class. The school has the National Healthy School and Activemark awards. On the day of the inspection, most pupils in Years 5 and 6 were away on a residential visit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this good school. 'As parents we would be hard pressed to find a more caring and pastoral environment for our child's crucial early years' was among the many extremely positive views expressed to inspectors. Indeed, high-quality care, support and guidance are key strengths of the school, and staff take full advantage of the school's small size to ensure that each pupil's needs are met. As another parent put it, 'Each child is known well on an individual basis, and their development and progress is monitored carefully. The school engages children on every level.' As a result, staff ensure that pupils get the help or encouragement they need and pupils respond very well. They achieve well academically and make excellent progress in their personal development.

When pupils first start school, they have widely differing needs. As a rule, when they start school, most pupils are well adjusted socially, and ready and eager to learn. Whatever their starting points, pupils of all abilities make good progress and, by the time they leave the school, standards are above average. This is confirmed by the school's national test results in recent years. The small proportion of pupils taking the tests means that any analysis must be treated with caution, because the performance of one pupil can have an exaggerated impact on the results. Nevertheless, Year 6 results are consistently above average and, given their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1, in Year 2, this represents a good level of achievement. Results have risen steadily in recent years and, for pupils in Year 6 in 2008, they were exceptionally high. Standards among current pupils in Year 6 are not quite so high, but they are making good progress and are well on track to maintain above-average standards. Results in Year 2 have risen steadily since 2006 and standards are above average here too, reflecting pupils' good progress from their starting points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Part of the school's success is based on the very careful tracking of pupils' progress. Careful assessments provide detailed information that is used very well to identify those needing extra help or a boost to reach the levels they are expected to reach. Pupils identified with learning difficulties, some of whom have significant special educational needs, are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties thrive in the supportive environment and make good progress. Although a few of these pupils occasionally present challenging behaviour, they are very well managed by staff. They are soon re-engaged in lessons, with no discernible impact on their learning or that of other pupils. Excellent use is made of outside specialists to help meet pupils' differing needs.

Strong teamwork underpins the school's work. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors share a very strong commitment to including all pupils, whatever their background or ability, and to continuing to improve what the school offers. Governors monitor the school's work closely and have a good understanding of their strategic role. The small team of staff share the responsibility for leading and managing subjects and other important aspects of the school's work. They do this well by making regular checks on the quality of lessons and the work in pupils' books, which, together with the information gained from assessments and the analysis of test results, give them an exceptionally clear and accurate view of what is working well and what needs to improve. Areas for development are pursued rigorously. They have successfully improved provision for more able pupils, for example, and, as a result, these pupils make good progress. Pupils of all abilities benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum that is well planned to meet the challenge of mixed-age and mixed-ability classes. This and the very good range of opportunities outside of lessons have a

considerable impact on pupils' high levels of enjoyment of school and are reflected in consistently well above average attendance levels. The school has rightly identified that its next step is to focus attention on the most able and talented pupils, recognising that there is scope for these pupils to take more responsibility for exploring and extending their learning. Its recent track record of success shows that it is well placed to do so.

Systems to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health and safety are extremely tight. Pupils report their appreciation of the care and attention they receive from staff and, consequently, they feel extremely safe in school, work hard and behave well. Lessons are well organised and, because pupils are eager to learn, they invariably run smoothly. Staff question pupils well, which helps them to keep track of pupils' understanding and to deal with any misconceptions. The capable support staff play a full part in ensuring that all pupils are fully engaged in the learning. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and, in English, provide sharp written feedback that informs pupils how well they have done and how they can improve their work. The quality of written feedback in mathematics is more patchy, however. Nevertheless, pupils have a good understanding of the targets they are set and they work hard to achieve them.

Good progress in the basic skills means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. A strong programme of personal, social and health education contributes to their excellent personal development. Pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own has improved since the last inspection. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives in part because of the school's successful acquisition of the National Healthy School award. The school functions well as a cohesive community and senior staff are beginning to evaluate the impact they are having further afield. One parent commented, 'The school is vital to the community and enhances it greatly', and inspectors found that pupils benefit from strong links with local organisations. For example, a recent writing competition was sponsored by the local Royal British Legion.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation class. Most arrive at school with a thirst for learning and they enjoy immensely the lively, briskly paced and, in the words of one parent, 'upbeat and interesting' teaching. The teacher has a good understanding of the needs of young children and takes great care to ensure that lessons take full account of their developing interests. Children thoroughly enjoyed making 'bee cafes' and observing snails at close quarters. The planning gives children regular access to all areas of learning and good use is made of the outdoor area. There is a good balance between activities led by staff and those chosen by the children. Staff are clear about what children are expected to learn. They guide them sensitively, giving the right amount of challenge or support, and keep a close check on their progress. Detailed notes are taken as the lesson unfolds and are used to produce very informative scrapbooks of children's learning. Occasionally, the purpose of some child-selected activities is not sufficiently clear. Standards of care are exceptionally high and this has a considerable impact on children's excellent personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the detailed written feedback given to pupils in English is replicated in mathematics.

- Provide more consistent opportunities for the most able and talented pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

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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?	1
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?	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

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?	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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	1
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**

04 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lavendon School, Olney, MK46 4HA

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed the inspectors to your school for its recent inspection. A special thank you to those pupils who met with us to give us their views. You gave us lots of helpful information.

Many of you and your parents told us that you go to a good school and we agree. We could see for ourselves how much you enjoy your learning. You behave well and work hard. Well done, and please keep it up. One of the things your school does best is the way the staff take care of you and give you the support you need. Lots of you said how safe you feel in school, and we were very impressed with how much you know about keeping safe and healthy. Most of you come to school every day, and this is another sign of how much you enjoy your lessons and the after-school clubs. Because your teachers do a good job, you are learning well and making good progress in your work, and the standards you reach are above those found in many other schools.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors are determined that it will become even better. We have asked them to do two things, and I know you will want to help. Firstly, your teachers give you lots of helpful comments when they mark your English books. We want them to give you just as much information in mathematics. You can help by reading carefully what they say, and doing your best to follow their guidance. Secondly, your staff have decided, and we agree, that they are going to give those of you with special gifts or talents the chance to make more decisions about your learning, so that you can learn even faster. Remember, you can come up with your own ideas too, and I am sure your teachers will be pleased to listen to them.

You are right to be proud of your school and we wish you good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Keith Williams

Lead Inspector