

Livingstone Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109432
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	337285
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Roger Stokes
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Crombie
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at records of pupils' progress, the outcomes of the school's monitoring of its work, the school's plans for improvement, safeguarding documentation, documentation related to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and analysed 26 parental questionnaires.

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

- the school's ability to reduce gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils
- the effectiveness of the school in promoting good attendance
- the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how the school uses monitoring and self-evaluation to influence school improvement and raise pupil outcomes.

Information about the school

Livingstone Lower is a smaller than average primary school which provides education

- for pupils from ages three to nine. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds with White British, Bangladeshi, Black African and those from other white backgrounds being the largest groups. Two thirds of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the normal starting points is higher than average. Many pupils join the school with little or no English. A few pupils join having received no previous schooling. The school holds an award for the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where all staff work as a team to ensure all pupils have a chance to succeed. Good leadership by the headteacher and effective management ensures that the school fully caters for the needs of its very diverse community. The headteacher, with the support of other key staff, has established a positive and inclusive climate for learning where each individual is valued and learning is fully tailored to meet pupils' needs. One parent wrote, 'From the minute the children step into the breakfast club to the minute they leave the school they are cherished and that is why they do so well.' Such comments fully reflect the overwhelmingly positive view of the vast majority of parents and carers.

Starting in the Reception year, a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, combined with good teaching, ensures that pupil outcomes are good in the basic skills. Close scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that achievement is outstanding in reading and writing for pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language. Good use of information and communication technology ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education. Pupils behave well, both in lessons and in the playground, because of good moral and social development. They exhibit considerable levels of knowledge and understanding about how to obtain a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep themselves safe within the familiar environments of home and school. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are very positive because of the strong sense of community that exists within the school. Pupils are considerate of each other and very keen to learn. They are respectful of the adults because they fully appreciate the excellent levels of care, guidance and support staff provided for them. Pupils are responding well to good opportunities for spiritual development through reflection on the central messages of assemblies. Their understanding of their place within a multi-cultural society is very good because staff ensure that the ethnic origins of all pupils are valued through festivals and visits to different places of worship as part of the religious education programme.

Good teaching and a creative, stimulating curriculum fully engage pupils in a wide range of learning experiences. This, combined with all staff encouraging them to be in school, ensures that pupils are keen to attend lessons. The high absence rates seen at the previous inspection have reduced steadily to currently broadly average levels. Provision is outstanding for pupils who speak English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Combined with a strong focus on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, excellent levels of care, guidance and support fully contribute to outstanding progress for these large groups of pupils. The assessment

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of pupils' progress is good and data are used well to ensure activities and support work are carefully matched to the needs of all pupils. The marking of pupils' work is regular and provides guidance on what pupils have done well. However, it is not used consistently across the school to fully inform pupils about what it is they need to do next to improve. Teachers are keen to develop a creative and relevant range of learning experiences that give meaning to pupils' learning. Planning is being developed but the school recognises that these plans do not currently ensure that pupils build on what they have learnt in foundation subjects, such as humanities and art.

Detailed plans for school improvement identify clear priorities for development and accountability. Monitoring and self-evaluation are satisfactory. Senior staff observe teaching regularly to improve individual performance. Those staff with a subject responsibility regularly report back to governors about the range of learning experiences for pupils. Although reports are detailed, too few focus on the impact of these learning experiences on the outcomes for pupils. Governors provide good levels of support to ensure that financial resources are used efficiently. Visits to the school are regularly undertaken but findings have not been used formally to inform the process of self-evaluation and review. However, the very clear vision, high expectations and endeavour of the headteacher and senior staff have ensured that the school has continued to build on the findings of the previous inspection. Good partnerships with other schools, outside agencies and parents contribute well towards the pupils' good achievement. Taking all factors into account the school demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils know clearly what they need to do next to improve their work by
 - improving the quality of marking to make it is more meaningful to pupils
 - providing pupils with specific targets that are more closely matched to their individual needs.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in the foundation subjects by
 - planning activities for pupils that help pupils to build steadily on what they have learnt before
 - monitoring lessons, with a clear focus linked to pupils' outcomes
- Ensure that the governing body plays a greater role in the school's overall development by
 - governors participating fully in the process of self-evaluation and review
 - establishing clear links between self-evaluation and planning for the future long-term development of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school has succeeded in narrowing the gaps in achievement between different

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groups of pupils to ensure good outcomes overall. From low starting points when they join the Reception Year, children make good progress to reach nationally expected levels of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 4. The attainment of boys is now more closely aligned to that of girls in literacy and numeracy as a result of improved teaching strategies to gain their interest. The school is particularly successful at improving outcomes for the most vulnerable pupils and those who join the school other than at the normal starting points with little or no experience of speaking English. This is because of good adult support in class, very carefully focused small group work and excellent levels of care and support. As a result, all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress in their learning from their respective starting points. More able pupils make good progress as a result of carefully planned work matched to their ability. Many pupils state that they love coming to school and this is reflected in the positive views of parents and carers. Pupils demonstrate a very clear understanding of right and wrong, work well in pairs and groups in class and demonstrate consideration for each other in their behaviour in the playground. Pupils respond excellently to activities that promote healthy lifestyles. For instance, many talk knowledgeably about the five food groups needed for a healthy diet, how physical activity can be beneficial to their well-being and what activities might damage their health. Parents comment that often they are challenged by their own children about what might harm their own health and well-being. Pupils agree that the school is a safe place and parents support this view. Discussions with groups of pupils, including the school council representatives, confirm that bullying is non-existent and that pupils are confident that adult support is available if any concerns arise. Inspection judgements are fully exemplified by the comment of one pupil who wrote, 'My school is kind, healthy and fun and safe.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Good teaching was seen in most lessons during the inspection. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards and artefacts, are used well in these lessons to illustrate key teaching points. Well-chosen questions challenge pupils' thinking and tasks are very carefully matched to the ability of pupils. In the very small number of lessons where the quality of learning is satisfactory rather than good, it is because teachers talk for too long, resources are not always used to good effect and the planned tasks are not matched carefully to the ability of all pupils in the class. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are good. Marking is regular and teachers' comments praise the efforts of pupils. However, marking sometimes lacks the necessary detail to really point out to pupils what they need to do next to improve.

Provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills is good. Pupils are prepared well for the next stages in their education and adult life through the use of equipment such as digital cameras and computers. Personal and social development is enhanced though a very strong emphasis on healthy lifestyles. Further enrichment is promoted through a good range of after school clubs, visits and visitors to the school. Creative aspects of the curriculum are being developed well within Year 1 to provide effective links with the Early Years Foundation Stage. Cross-curricular themes are planned across Years 2 to 4 to provide greater relevance to pupils' learning. However, planning lacks the necessary detail to fully ensure pupils build on what they learnt in each of the foundation subjects.

The level of care, guidance and support is excellent and contributes significantly to pupils' achievement. Very close attention is paid to the most vulnerable pupils who rapidly grow in confidence and often make significant strides in their learning. Pupils' progress is tracked systematically and this assessment information is used very well to narrow any gaps in achievement through well-designed support programmes. This carefully targeted support, precisely linked to individual needs, together with highly effective working relationships with external agencies, ensures that the achievement of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of those who speak English as an additional language, is excellent. An extensive range of strategies is used to promote good attendance including the use of mobile phone texts to communicate with parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's very clear vision that all should succeed is shared by all staff. With the support of other school leaders, she has created an inclusive climate for learning where the efforts and diverse backgrounds of all are valued. It is firmly rooted in the improvement of teaching in order to raise standards for all pupils. Teamwork is a real strength within the staff. Together, they all have a desire to improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences and life chances. Management of performance is well organised. Many policies and procedures have been reviewed following the previous inspection. Safeguarding procedures are good and applied with rigour. Community cohesion is promoted well within the school. Planning for its promotion in both a local and international context is satisfactory. The headteacher's considerable expertise in teaching pupils with English as an additional language has been effectively transferred to staff through well-focused training. This expertise is now often shared with other schools, and is indicative of the strength of the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity. The regular monitoring of teaching ensures that self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Subject coordinators contribute to this through an annual report to the governing body. However, these reports pay too much attention to the activities undertaken rather than assessing their quality and impact on pupil outcomes. This is particularly so in the foundation subjects.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive but their role in self-evaluation is underdeveloped and this limits their ability to fully play a part in shaping the strategic direction of the school. The partnership is good between parents, carers and the school and positively contributes towards pupils' achievements. Provision is further enhanced through a number of partnership arrangements with other outside agencies and schools. Financial management is efficient and resources are used well to support pupils' learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall quality of provision is good. It is excellent for children in the pre-school unit because of the comprehensive planning, thorough assessment of children's rapid progress and outstanding levels of support from all key workers. These contribute significantly to the achievement of children in the Reception class. Planning for all aspects of learning is consistent with government guidance for teaching children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All children in both classes are making good progress in all areas of learning because of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum that provides every child with good opportunities to learn through creative play. Considerable emphasis is placed in developing the children's communication and early literacy skills. For instance, in both classes all staff encourage children to participate in role-play in many aspects of their learning to develop vocabulary and use their imagination. Children with little or no experience of English respond very well to this provision. Number work is incorporated well into other areas of learning and practical activities give relevance to children about mathematics in the world around them.

Relationships are very positive between adults and children and children themselves. Teamwork between staff in both classes is a very strong feature of provision. Joint planning facilitates the efficient use of physical and human resources and the development of an exciting curriculum for all children. The level of care, guidance and support is outstanding and children, including those who join the classes other than at the normal points of entry, rapidly grow in confidence. Assessment is a strength. This is because all staff actively participate in the ongoing assessment of children's progress and the recording of significant milestones in their learning. The integration of the pre-school and Reception classes into a successful Early Years Foundation Stage unit is a direct result of good leadership. Monitoring the quality of provision and learning experiences is regular but based on informal observations. The school recognises that self-evaluation now needs to be more structured in order to improve outcomes for children further.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. Most are satisfied with their children's progress and several stated that their children had come on leaps and bounds since being at the school. Inspectors agree.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Livingstone Lower School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 137 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	73	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	69	8	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	69	8	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	65	9	35	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	62	9	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	65	8	31	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	73	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	11	42	13	50	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	62	8	31	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	46	14	54	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	50	11	42	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	50	13	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	58	11	42	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Livingstone Lower School, Bedford, MK41 7LG

I would like to thank you all on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed visiting your school and we were so impressed with your good behaviour and attitudes towards learning. You were very sensible when you spoke to us and we quickly understood that you love being at this school. This is not surprising because you go to a good school where everyone is treated as an individual to make sure they make good progress. Many of you told me that the school is a happy place in which to learn in and I agree with you. The young children in Reception are doing well. Your headteacher has built up a good team of teachers and support staff around her. They all work together to allow you to do your best while you are at school. The teachers have worked hard to improve your knowledge of sounds and letters to improve your reading and writing. The teachers mark your written work regularly but it is not always as helpful as it could be. We have asked them to make sure that, in future, their marking tells you exactly what you need to next to improve and links carefully with your learning targets. You can play your part by thinking carefully about their comments, writing accurately and trying to use interesting words in your sentences. The teachers make your lessons interesting and provide good opportunities for you to work together with your friends. They plan work that links several subjects together but sometimes these links are not as good as they could be. We have asked them, in future, to look more carefully at what you do to ensure you make steady progress in all your learning. The staff provide excellent levels of care and support for you all. They always take the time and trouble to listen to your concerns. The governors are keen for the school to improve and they give lots of support to the staff. We have asked them to work even more closely with your headteacher and the staff to help to make the school even better.

Thanks again for making us so welcome and I wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector

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