

Pinchmill Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109451
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	337290
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don Grant
Headteacher	Julie Grey
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons involving three teachers and three teaching assistants. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, self-evaluation form and local authority monitoring reports. They also analysed 45 questionnaires from parents and carers, 27 from pupils and seven staff questionnaires.

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

- teachers' expectations and their impact, particularly on girls' progress in mathematics and the progress of gifted and talented pupils
- how the school's care encourages pupils' personal development, well-being and their enjoyment of learning, and promotes a desire to achieve
- how well leaders and managers focus on improvement, for example, in mathematics
- whether staff changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have affected children's progress.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. Most of its pupils come from the local and nearby villages. Many come from advantaged backgrounds and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Almost all of the pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status, Eco Schools status and Activemark. It is part of the North Bedfordshire Schools Trust. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a high level of staff change.

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

Pinchmill Lower continues to provide a good education for its pupils. It has several outstanding features. The school ensures a caring, friendly and supportive environment where pupils feel safe and enjoy their learning. One parent commented, 'This is a very happy place and a wonderful start to my children's education'. The school has a strong sense of community and behaviour is excellent. Teachers know pupils well and give good individual care and guidance to ensure that they settle to their work quickly and achieve well. The strong partnership between teachers and teaching assistants, together with the outstanding use of learning targets, help pupils to focus on what they need to do to improve their work. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those starting to drop behind, benefit particularly from this good support and make good progress. A high level of staff change, which concerns some parents and carers, has been handled effectively by the strong leadership of the headteacher. She has used the opportunity well to bring together an increasingly cohesive staff team that provides a good quality of teaching.

Outstanding links with external agencies and other local schools help to support and develop staff skills and enhance the range of learning opportunities for pupils, particularly in sport. Pupils enjoy the very interesting curriculum themes that have been introduced. Their enthusiasm is clearly evident when they talk excitedly about their work, for example on 'Space' and the 'Take Home Tasks' that they undertake, some with parental involvement, that enable them to cover the topic in great detail. Many participate in a good range of clubs, especially sporting. This participation, together with their involvement in physical education lessons and the 'Activate' sessions during the day, helps them to have an excellent understanding about healthy lifestyles. Pupils' understanding of life in different communities within the United Kingdom and the wider world is not as strong.

Most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the Hedgehogs class with skills and abilities that are above those expected for their age. Despite changes in staff, children benefit from an effectively organised and well-resourced provision and make good progress. Pupils make good progress overall throughout the school. By the end of Year 4 pupils' attainment is high.

There are examples of outstanding teaching that are valued highly by pupils and their parents and carers. Here teachers plan in detail to meet the range of different learning needs and use a very good range of interesting ideas to capture pupils' interest. Teachers through the school have high expectations of the level of work pupils can reach. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of how much work pupils can achieve within the time are not so demanding and so pace can drop.

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

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The purposeful leadership of the headteacher, supported well by some key staff, has improved teaching and raised the rate of progress, for example in mathematics in Key Stage 1. The capacity to sustain this improvement is good. Self-evaluation is accurate. Teachers at all levels use tracking procedures very effectively to check carefully on each pupil's progress and target improvement. However, changes in staff and governors have limited their involvement in and contribution to the school's more formal self-evaluation systems. As a result, opportunities to engage these stakeholders in understanding and owning further strategies for improvement are not fully exploited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently challenge pupils to keep their pace of work high
 - widening the contributions made by key staff and governors in evaluating how well the school is doing and targeting improvement rigorously.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of living in increasingly diverse communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Achievement is outstanding - standards are high by Year 4 and progress is good. Year 2 national assessments over the last three years indicate excellent progress in writing. Progress in mathematics was slower, particularly for girls, but has now accelerated. Pupils from different groups, including girls and boys, and more able or gifted pupils, are all now making good progress through the school. Learning is good in lessons. It is sometimes outstanding, because of the imaginative way in which teachers manage and enthuse pupils. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils demonstrated their understanding of the use of adjectives and verbs by clapping and enthusiastically naming them each time they were used. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to each other, showing respect for each other's contributions. They have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The school council contributes successfully to the school and local communities, for example through the Christmas Fayre, although their involvement in improving aspects of the school's provision is not as developed. Pupils' understanding of the world of work is enhanced by their involvement in fund-raising events for charities, and their excellent attendance and attainment prepare them extremely well for the future. Pupils' social and moral development is excellent and reflects the school's ethos. Their spiritual and cultural development is good, although their knowledge of different cultures and faiths is not developed as fully.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make very effective use of assessments to plan lessons carefully, with clear learning objectives, and match activities to the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Excellent class management and the effective partnership with teaching assistants help everyone to become fully involved and achieve well. Good marking, linked closely to pupils' improvement targets, helps to raise pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy. Some teachers have consistently high expectations, for example, explaining what they expect each different group of pupils to achieve in the lesson. They continually remind them to ensure that they respond to the challenge, but this is not a consistent feature of all lessons.

The curriculum offers an outstanding range of interesting activities and is enhanced very successfully by extra-curricular clubs, visits and visitors. For example, trips to the Bedford museum and visiting staff from other trust schools extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in history and French. Careful planning ensures that topics take into account differing needs and start at the right level of skills and knowledge. Specific needs, for example of some pupils with social difficulties, are met well through a nurture group.

The good care, guidance and support are key factors in helping pupils enjoy school and encouraging them to try hard. It helps them feel valued and raises self-esteem. Pupils benefit from well-targeted support in classroom activities and from effective induction processes when they join the school and when they move to the middle school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</p> <p>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms</p>	
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<p>The quality of teaching</p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The use of assessment to support learning</p>	2
	1
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	1
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has benefited from the outstanding and purposeful leadership of the headteacher during a period of staff change since the last inspection. She has maintained a strong focus on raising standards and used opportunities exceptionally well to enhance the quality of education provided by the school. One parent commented 'I am impressed that she has assembled a very competent team of inspiring teachers which gives me confidence in her as a leader and manager of the school.' Working closely with her staff and a supportive governing body, she has established robust systems to check on how well the school is doing. Those introduced to track achievement and the headteacher's monitoring of teaching are excellent. However, because of changes in the staff and governing body, some key staff and governors are not fully involved in evaluating and strategically planning improvements.

Governors support and challenge well. They are fully aware of statutory responsibilities. A clear analysis of its context has led to a secure plan to enhance the way the school promotes community cohesion. This is currently very strong internally and within the local area, but less developed with respect to national and world communities. The school is extremely effective in promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination, with all staff showing a high commitment and using sophisticated tracking. Pupils of all abilities take a full part in what the school offers. All staff are suitably trained in child protection, and there are good systems for recording any concerns. This ensures that they are constantly vigilant and provide good support. Minor points to do with the development of site safety were raised with the school during the inspection. None of these concerned an immediate threat to children's welfare.

The school has good links with most parents and carers, encouraging them to contribute to their children's learning. They are given detailed information and good opportunities to understand how well their children are doing. For example, staff arrange for them to 'pop-in' to school to see their children's work and check on progress towards their targets.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	2
	1

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 effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception Year children make good progress in Hedgehogs class because the excellent leadership of the headteacher has maintained good provision during a period of frequent staff change. Good improvements in resources since the last inspection, for example for the outdoor area, have increased opportunities to link the different areas of learning. Children benefit from a very well planned and organised programme of activities. The school provides a good balance between activities that are led by adults and those that the children choose to do themselves.

Teaching is good. The teacher has established a warm and friendly environment in which children are happy and keen to participate in a good range of interesting activities. On-going assessments are used to guide teaching although these are limited when there is no support assistant working with the teacher. Questions are used successfully to encourage children to put forward their ideas, although opportunities to extend more able children, for example in their language skills, are not always taken. Very effective links with the on-site pre-school enables a smooth induction to school.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

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

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school. Many value its friendly, caring approach - one commented 'it's like a second family' - which helps their children to feel safe and enjoy school. Most are pleased with the quality of teaching and the progress being made by their children. They feel that the school meets their children's particular needs. A minority were concerned about the high level of staff change and aspects of the leadership of the school. Inspectors judged that the headteacher provides strong leadership. She has managed a difficult situation well to minimise the disruption to children's learning and improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pinchmill 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 70 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	71	13	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	33	23	51	3	7	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	29	26	58	3	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	16	36	25	56	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	29	24	53	5	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	53	20	44	1	2	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)	17	38	18	40	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	24	25	56	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	38	20	44	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	20	24	53	7	16	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	5	11	19	42	6	13	11	24
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	44	21	47	0	0	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Pinchmill Lower School, Bedford, MK43 7JD

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. After spending two days in your school, talking with you about what you do in school, looking at your work, watching you learn and talking to your teachers, I have judged that your school is good.

You clearly enjoy school and I was pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent 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 contribute to your school and local communities, for example when selling calendars at the Christmas Fayre. Some Year 4 pupils told me that you enjoy the different themes and the excellent range of trips and activities. They also told me that they enjoy the way in which teachers make your lessons interesting. However, every school can improve. I have asked Mrs Grey and the staff to make sure they remind you in lessons about how much work you can get through before the lesson ends, so you remember to keep working hard. You can help by trying to get on quickly. I have also asked them to help you get a better understanding of what life is like for people living in different communities in this country and in the wider world.

Your school has had many changes in staff in recent years and Mrs Grey has worked very hard with your teachers to ensure that you continue to receive a good education. There have also been some new governors (these are people who may be from outside who help the school make decisions). I would like the governors and members of staff to all be involved in checking on how the school is doing and how they can make it even better.

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

Yours sincerely

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector

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