

Bedford Road Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109461
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	337292
Inspection dates	1–2 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Lionel Stewart
Headteacher	Mrs Lindsay Gould
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning; 22 lessons were observed and 10 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, 72 parent questionnaires, 100 pupil and four staff questionnaires.

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

- the standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2
- whether changes to the curriculum have improved pupils' attitudes and achievements
- how well the leadership team and governors have improved the quality teaching and learning
- whether pupils have a good understanding of people's lives in other communities and how well the values promoted by the school are reflected in their own school community.

Information about the school

Bedford Road Lower is larger than average for a school of this type. Most pupils come from the local area, although 26% come from outside the immediate locality. They come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds and an above average proportion speak English as an additional language. A small number are at the early stages of English language acquisition. An above average proportion of pupils take a free school meal. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes and in a pre-school that operates within the children's centre situated on the school site. This provision is inspected separately as it is privately run. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average overall and well-above average in some year groups. A nurture group operates for three days each week and caters for a small number of pupils with extreme behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and the Financial Management Standard in Schools Award.

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

Bedford Road Lower School continues to provide a good education for its pupils and is valued highly by pupils and their parents. It has some outstanding features, particularly the safe, caring and supportive learning environment. Many parents commented about how happy their children are in school and how welcoming the school is. 'We believe it to be happy and well run and we have always been made to feel welcome,' commented one parent. The school has a strong sense of community in which each pupil is valued and given excellent support to enable them to settle quickly and achieve well. The clear and purposeful lead given through the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and supported by an effective team of staff and governors, ensures that the school is constantly looking at ways to improve the education it provides and how well pupils achieve. Senior leaders have established good procedures to check on how well the school is doing and to target areas for improvement. This has resulted in consistently good or better teaching and an exciting innovative curriculum. So, standards are rising and the school is well placed to improve further.

Staff have created a vibrant, attractive learning environment with eye-catching displays of pupils' work. Pupils are constantly encouraged to remember the key values that underpin the school's ethos and promote good relationships. Pupils work and play together well. Behaviour is good, and often excellent in lessons. Respect is evident and pupils encourage each other to achieve as well as they can. All staff maintain a consistent focus on meeting the personal and learning needs of each pupil. This is reflected clearly in the outstanding care, support and guidance, for example in the work of the nurture group, which helps pupils from a wide range of different backgrounds to get on well together. Cohesion within the school and local communities is good, although pupils' understanding of life in communities in the wider world is less well developed. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their improving attendance and their excitement in achieving the weekly award for the class with best attendance.

Children join the Reception classes with skills and abilities below those expected nationally for their age. Many are at a low level in their basic English language skills. They make good progress because of the interesting learning activities, the good personal support and the consistently effective teaching. Pupils continue to progress well throughout the school. The very effective use of regular assessments enables teachers to identify and support any individual who is not on track to attain their end of year target. Consequently, standards have improved and are continuing to rise. Standards in Year 2 have risen over the last two years to nationally expected levels, especially in writing. By the end of Year 4, pupils continue to attain broadly average levels. Current assessment data shows that standards are continuing to rise and pupils are on target to

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achieve even better, for example, in mathematics. All pupils make good progress because of the school's effective tracking. Some pupils who join the school in the early stages of English language acquisition make rapid progress and quickly catch up because of the excellent support and guidance given. Pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are being developed effectively through specific lessons. They are then extended well, particularly writing, through carefully planned curriculum themes that link subjects together successfully to enhance pupils' enjoyment.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, working in an effective partnership with the assistant head and senior leadership team, ensures that the development of every child is given high priority. The governors have ensured that pupils work in a safe and secure learning environment. They have invested carefully in maintaining staff to provide support to meet the wide range of pupils' learning and social needs. For example, the family liaison worker and the nurture group staff provide invaluable care, guidance and support to specific pupils and their families. These pupils are included fully in the school's programme and achieve well. This enables the school to achieve good value for money. The leadership team has focused successfully on improving teaching across the school. It is now of a consistently good quality, with some outstanding practice. Teachers use assessment information to plan activities that match pupils' different learning needs. Many use a range of assessment processes to help pupils know how to improve their work, although these are not yet embedded fully in each class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend good practice in the use of peer and self-assessment and pupil targets to help pupils understand how to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of living in contrasting communities in the United Kingdom and wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well in lessons because teachers provide a good range of interesting activities matched well to different learning needs. So, pupils are enthusiastic in their approach and benefit from the effective support given by teachers and teaching assistants. The school, particularly through the work of the assistant headteacher, is very effective in using assessments to check on the progress of every pupil. Data is updated and analysed each term. Where there is evidence of groups of pupils not being on target to achieve their expected attainment, additional support is quickly put in place and its effectiveness is closely checked. The recent introduction of an additional support programme is benefiting pupils of all abilities, for example, more able mathematicians. This provision is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stage of learning English.

Pupils enjoy their learning, particularly the 'stunning starts' that are used to introduce new curriculum themes, for example, when visiting a simulated tomb as part of the Ancient Egypt topic. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that their ideas are

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valued. They keep fit by participating in a good range of physical activities and have an excellent understanding of what is meant by a healthy diet. The school has worked hard with the kitchen manager and school nurse to promote healthy eating, for example by inviting parents to try a school dinner. Pupils contribute to the local community, for example by working with a street ranger to increase litter awareness. Preparation for their future economic well-being is good, for example, some Year 4 pupils go through an application and interview process when applying to become a Key Stage 1 helper. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The social and moral aspects are enhanced particularly well by the school's focus on 'values'. Pupils enhance their knowledge of different cultures satisfactorily through curriculum themes, for example, in a topic on Africa. They know less about life in other countries, although the school is planning to develop this aspect.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good class management, effective planning and high quality individual support from teachers and teaching assistants ensure that all pupils are included purposefully in

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

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lessons and achieve well. Teachers use resources successfully to grasp pupils' interest, for example when using a variety of bricks to create a 'mini' Wall of China. They use assessments to match activities to pupils' learning needs. In most classes, teachers use questions successfully to encourage pupils to contribute their ideas in class discussions, although their use of additionally challenging questions to extend more able pupils is less effective. Teachers' use of different assessment processes, for example, peer and self-assessment, to help pupils improve their work is effective in some classes but not established consistently across the school.

The imaginative and well-organised curriculum offers a broad range of rich and memorable experiences that are particularly effective in promoting an enthusiasm for learning. Innovative approaches enable pupils to apply their skills in a wide variety of ways. This enhances their learning and raises standards, for example in writing. Curriculum themes are supported excellently by resources such as cameras and sound pods and by encouraging parents' involvement through 'take away tasks'. An evaluation of skills taught through the themes enables teachers to cover any gaps through specific key skills sessions. The wide range of well-planned activities ensures that all pupils are included fully, for example gifted and talented, and achieve well. A good range of extra-curricular activities, especially sports, enhances the programme.

The outstanding care, guidance and support are key factors in helping pupils to enjoy school and to achieve well. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit particularly from lots of individual attention and the school's effective links with external agencies and families. The contributions of the family liaison worker and the nurture group staff are particularly valuable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and a sustained focus on ensuring that all pupils enjoy school and achieve as well as they can. She has established a strong team approach in which staff are encouraged to work together to improve their professional skills and raise pupils' achievement. The headteacher and senior staff evaluate teaching carefully. This has led to good improvements and better achievement. The contribution of subject leaders has improved since the last inspection and is planned for further development. Governors continue to promote equal opportunities well, given the wide

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range of pupils' needs and interests and tackle any discrimination. They are kept well-informed about how well the school is doing. Their evaluation of the school's performance is becoming more rigorous and a current audit of their skills is planned to target further developments.

The school has a good partnership with parents, which contributes successfully to their children's learning, for example, through the family liaison worker. Effective links with other local schools enhance the range of learning opportunities for pupils. The school is successful in actively promoting cohesion within the school and local communities, for example, by visiting local places of worship. The school is planning to enhance pupils' understanding of life in different communities, for example by linking with schools in a rural area and in an African village.

All safeguarding procedures are robust and are carried out diligently to provide a secure and safe learning environment. The headteacher and governors place high priority on pupils' safety and procedures are extremely well managed, especially for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Regular and very well devised training for staff at all levels, particularly in child protection issues, ensures that they are constantly vigilant and provide highly effective support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

Children make good progress in the Reception Year because of consistently good teaching and a well-organised programme of theme-based learning activities. These are supported very effectively by a good range of resources both for indoor and outdoor

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learning. For example, the creation of a 'pirate ship' stimulated children's imagination and resulted in some exciting role play activities. Key basic skills, for example early writing skills, are promoted successfully through such interesting activities, for example when trying to locate the 'treasure'. Parents are pleased with the way in which their children settle and how they are kept informed and involved, including those who do not speak English at home. Good leadership and management have maintained a strong focus on checking carefully on how each child is doing. Staff make good use of detailed assessment information to ensure that the progress of individuals is carefully checked. This assessment information is used well to inform teaching although it is not always collected in a way that can be shared effectively with parents. Children make good progress in all areas of learning; progress is particularly good in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they enter Year 1, pupils attain standards overall that meet expected levels in most areas of learning, except in aspects of communication, language and literacy.

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

Most parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. They value its caring, supportive approach, which helps their children to feel safe and enjoy school. Most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching and the progress being made by their children. Most parents are kept well informed about their child's progress, a view confirmed by inspectors, although a very small number said that they would welcome more information. A small number of parents are concerned about the behaviour of some pupils at lunchtimes. Inspectors confirmed the view of most parents that staff deal successfully with the few incidents of unacceptable behaviour and pupils know how they are expected to behave.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bedford Road 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 273 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	55	31	42	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	56	31	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	36	39	53	6	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	38	39	53	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	41	40	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	33	45	62	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	38	44	60	1	1	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)	18	25	40	55	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	33	45	62	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	30	35	48	10	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	27	40	55	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	24	33	44	60	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	48	34	47	1	1	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.



4 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Bedford Road Lower School, Bedford, MK42 8QH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. After spending two days in the school, talking with you about what you do there, looking at your work, watching you learn and talking to your teachers, we have judged that your school is good. It has some outstanding features.

You clearly enjoy school and value the care and help you receive. We were pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. By talking to school councillors and some Year 4 pupils, we found out that you make a good contribution to your school and local communities, for example by raising money for different charities. We have asked the headteacher and her staff 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.

You told us that you learn a lot in school and particularly enjoy the interesting curriculum themes. You are making good progress in your lessons. This is because your teachers and support assistants regularly check on how well you are doing and support and encourage you to do even better. They plan carefully to help you improve your skills. You told us that you value the help you receive from your teachers and other staff. Many of you are getting a better understanding of how you are doing in your work. Some of you know what it is you need to do to improve, although this is not always clearly understood. We have asked the headteacher and her staff to try to give you a clearer understanding of what it is you need to improve. We hope that you will try really hard to use this guidance and attain higher standards.

Thank you again for helping us 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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