

Kempston Rural Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109463
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	337294
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Moffat
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Stanbridge
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 11 lessons or parts of lessons while visiting five teaching staff. Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, teaching staff and a group of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, arrangements for safeguarding and pupils' work. Staff and pupil questionnaires were also scrutinised along with 65 completed by parents and carers.

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

- the progress of the most able children across the school, particularly in mathematics and reading
- the effectiveness of teachers' planning for pupils of different abilities
- how well subject leaders manage and coordinate their areas.

Information about the school

Kempston Rural is a much smaller-than-average school, although the number on roll has increased significantly since the previous inspection. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that seen nationally. The Early Years Foundation Stage caters for children in a single Reception class.

The school holds Healthy Schools and Investor in People status and has gained the Intermediate International Schools award. The governing body manages an after-school club on three days a week during school terms.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils and this is reflected in the views of most parents and carers. The views of one parent are typical of many when commenting, 'Kempston Rural Lower is a wonderfully safe, supporting and nurturing environment for young children. I feel very fortunate that my child is at such a lovely school.' Pupils really enjoy all aspects of school life and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance and their excellent behaviour. The school provides them with many memorable experiences such as the 'Pirate Day' when, along with staff and parents, they paddled bell boats down the nearby river and sailed in dinghies at a local sailing lake. This day provided them with a rich stream of activities that enhanced their learning.

Children enter school with skills and abilities that are a little below those seen nationally. However, they make rapid progress, so that by the end of Year 4, attainment is well above average in all areas. Significant improvement has been made since the previous inspection in developing pupils' writing skills which are much better than those seen nationally. Skills in mathematics are also well developed, although the school has rightly identified the need for even more pupils to attain the higher levels by ensuring that teachers encourage the most able to make even better progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress very well; the result of the early identification of their needs and the very effective support that ensures they achieve their potential.

An outstanding curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support, together with consistently good teaching, ensure that pupils make excellent progress as they move through the school. The pupils have a very clear understanding of their targets, know exactly what they have to do to improve and are keen to achieve their goals. Teachers' excellent questioning keeps pupils on their toes and lessons are made interesting through effective use of technology, the local environment and learning resources. A significant contributory factor in the pupils' outstanding progress is the excellent links between the school and parents and carers. They are kept extremely well informed and support their children's learning very well, for example in helping with the regular homework tasks.

The headteacher and senior staff make a significant contribution to the school's drive for improvement. They are well supported by the governing body in their determination to raise standards further. The leadership team has successfully addressed the key issues from the previous inspection, improving the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the quality of pupils' writing and the feedback teachers provide to pupils on their work. Subject coordinators monitor and manage their subjects effectively. However,

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there is no complacency and rigorous self-evaluation ensures there is a very clear picture of what needs to be improved further. The leadership is working hard to ensure all teachers make the best use of assessment information to pitch work at the correct level for all pupils and is rightly focussing its efforts in mathematics. Based on the consistently above average levels of attainment, excellent progress made by the pupils and elements of outstanding provision, the school is well placed to make and sustain further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics by:
 - moving them on to more challenging activities sooner in the lesson
 - ensuring that planning always highlights what these pupils should be able to do by the end of the lesson.

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

Pupils' attainment over the past three years has been significantly above average. Their excellent progress is confirmed by work observed during lessons and in their books. Most pupils are on course to attain standards that are well above average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4. Writing skills develop particularly well; the result of a concerted drive to accelerate progress in this area. Skills in mathematics are also very good overall. However, a small number of more able pupils could do better with a greater focus on what is expected of them. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. Their great enthusiasm for learning and their enjoyment is evident in all areas of school life and this contributes to their excellent achievement. Pupils are very keen to work with and to help one another. However, they also work well independently and demonstrate increasing maturity as they move through the school, building effectively on the wide range of opportunities provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to stay safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. They have a very good understanding of staying healthy through plenty of exercise and a good diet. They particularly enjoy the regular 'multi-sports' activities that are provided. However, pupils acknowledge that they do not always put their understanding into practice because they enjoy some of the foods which they know are not healthy. Pupils are fully involved in their local community, with many church activities and fundraising activities for charities. Amongst others they are now the proud sponsors of a lion and a penguin. They have a very strong moral understanding and older pupils are very supportive of the younger pupils through the 'buddy system'. They have a good understanding of other cultures through links with schools in Italy, the Netherlands, America and New Zealand. Links with a larger primary school in Bedford provide them with a good awareness of life beyond Kempston. Pupils' above average basic skills and their excellent communication and social awareness prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are interesting and varied and teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. Teachers question pupils well and their speech and communication develop well as a result. The effective teaching of phonics, which begins in the Early Years Foundation class, improves pupils' reading, spelling and writing skills. There is no wasted time and teachers make sure that lessons move briskly. Their planning ensures that work is matched accurately to pupils' ability although, very occasionally, teachers miss the opportunity to extend the learning of the most able pupils in mathematics by not setting them off on more challenging work sooner. Teachers know their pupils well; the result of careful analysis of their work. Feedback is specific, ensuring their learning progresses rapidly.

The curriculum is matched very well to the pupils' needs. The school has adopted a creative approach to the curriculum and a wide range of activities successfully capture the pupils' imagination. For example, science and Tudor days contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. A wide range of clubs including sailing, French, golf, and drama add to the quality of the curriculum. Pupils' musical and artistic skills are

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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enhanced through singing, instrumental tuition and street dancing clubs. Teachers are supported very effectively by visiting specialists and coaches. Visitors and visits, including a residential journey, complement the provision very well. The pupils have followed the construction of a bypass and watched with interest as their time capsule was buried adjacent to the new road.

Pupils are very well looked after and supported. Careful tracking of their work enables intervention programmes to be initiated for those pupils in danger of falling behind. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and provided with very effective support by teaching assistants. Those who are potentially vulnerable are also supported very effectively, enabling them to take a full part in all aspects of school life. An after-school club provides excellent care for pupils three days a week.

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 leadership team has been successful in ensuring all pupils have equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. The school has worked hard to enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of people from differing cultures and backgrounds through an effective community cohesion plan. Links with schools across the globe are well established and the school is the hub of the local community. Links with parents and carers are excellent and there are good links with other schools and outside agencies that support pupils' learning well.

The leadership team monitors the quality of teaching very effectively and provides strong and effective guidance to enable teachers to improve their planning, subject knowledge and use of assessment. Morale is high and staff demonstrate a determination to further improve the provision. They are constantly seeking ways to develop their practice. The leadership team makes very effective use of its rigorous tracking procedures to ensure that all pupils progress well. Good care is taken to promote the safety and security of pupils and, at the time of the inspection, rigorous safeguarding procedures were in place. The school provides excellent value for money. Resources are plentiful and well utilised. The significant increase in pupil numbers has been very well managed, ensuring that there is sufficient classroom accommodation and improved outdoor space.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are provided with a good start to their education. As a result of strong teaching and a very well organised curriculum, children make rapid progress. On entry to Year 1, children's attainment is above average in all areas of learning. There is a very good balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities. For example, the teacher questioned the children effectively about the snails they were observing. The children then went on to select from a wide range of activities which enhanced their knowledge and understanding of minibeasts and garden creatures. There is an excellent role play area which changes regularly. Last term, it was an Arctic setting and has recently been transformed into 'Grandpa's Garden Shed' where children learn about garden creatures. Assessment is detailed and individual 'learning journey' booklets provide parents and staff with an ongoing picture of how well the children are progressing. Considerable improvements have been made to the outside learning environment since the previous inspection and it is now an extension of the indoor classroom. Unfortunately, the very limited space does not allow the children 'freeflow' opportunities to use wheeled vehicles and climbing apparatus. The teacher compensates for this by having regular whole-class sessions outside. The headteacher is effectively overseeing the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage on a temporary basis.

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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	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost without exception, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are totally positive about all aspects of school life. One parent expressed concern about their child's progress and how they were informed about the progress being made. The inspectors found that children make exceptional progress and that parents are kept very well informed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kempston Rural 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 103 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	83	10	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	89	7	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	68	20	31	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	75	15	23	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	83	11	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	71	19	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	75	16	25	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)	43	66	17	26	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	72	18	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	72	17	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	68	19	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	86	9	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	85	10	15	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

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.



27 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kempston Rural Lower School, Bedfordshire, MK43 8RH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome and talking to me when I visited your school recently. You told me how good you thought the school was so you will probably not be surprised that I found it outstanding. I really enjoyed watching you work and was delighted see how enthusiastic you were and to see you behave so well. I can tell that you enjoy school because your attendance is so high. You get on very well with each other and look after one another well.

Children in the Reception class are provided with a good start and you all make rapid progress as you move through the school. Mrs Standbridge and her staff are working really hard to make the school even better. They provide you with an excellent range of activities that you all thoroughly enjoy and teachers make learning really interesting and exciting for you. You told me how much you enjoyed paddling down the river on the 'Pirates Day' and how much you are looking forward to your residential journey. You learn a lot about other countries through the links you have with schools abroad and it is good that you are concerned about those who are less fortunate than yourselves. I am sure that the money you raise through the charity activities will be valued by them. The staff look after you very well and you know they will help you if you have a problem.

I have asked the staff and governors to make the school even better by making sure that those of you who find work a little easy in mathematics are given work that really makes you think hard. Every one of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best all of the time.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards

Lead inspector

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