

Lawnside Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109500
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337303
Inspection dates	4–5 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Clare Neish
Headteacher	Mrs Carla Goodall
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. One of the inspectors focused mainly on safeguarding. Nineteen lessons or part lessons were observed and 11 teachers were seen. The inspection team observed the school's work and examined its policies, assessments, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. There were informal conversations with parents. The inspectors analysed 47 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and others by staff and pupils.

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

- improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection
- the effectiveness of strategies to improve writing
- strategies to improve mathematics in Key Stage 2
- the effectiveness of evaluation and improvement planning by all leaders and managers.

Information about the school

Lawnside Lower is an average size school. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The nature of these difficulties lies mainly in the areas of emotional, speech, language and communication. Many families in the area face challenging circumstances. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Reception.

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

Lawnside Lower is a good school. There are some outstanding aspects to its work. Highly effective care, guidance and support and a very positive school atmosphere make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are courteous, friendly and relate very well to adults and to their peers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is often exemplary. Pupils feel extremely safe and show a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Community cohesion is promoted well and there is a strong partnership with parents and other schools.

Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and an increasingly creative curriculum. Most year groups enter Reception with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is now good and children are making good progress in all areas of learning. Good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in the current Year 4 attainment is average. Positive steps are being made to further improve pupils' performance in literacy across the school. A stronger emphasis on pupils' problem-solving skills is having a positive impact on their progress in mathematics.

Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and use a range of methods to promote productive learning. Questioning is used effectively to check pupils' understanding. In a few cases, the purpose of the lesson is not effectively shared with the class. In the main, assessment is used well to plan teaching and match tasks to pupils' different abilities. Occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently challenging to extend all pupils, particularly the more able. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of additional activities. Art and the use of the environment are also strengths.

The headteacher provides good direction. With her staff, she has created a very positive school ethos for pupils to learn. Leaders and managers are successfully promoting good quality provision and positive outcomes for pupils. Teamwork among the staff is strong. There is a good capacity for the school to improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and so the school has a clear understanding of its performance. Effective action is taken to bring about improvements where needed. The role of subject leaders has been strengthened since the last inspection and they play a fuller part in monitoring and developing their areas of responsibility. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities to support and observe teaching and learning. Led by an enthusiastic chair, the governors make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve elements of teaching by ensuring that in all lessons:

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- the purpose of the lesson is shared with the class so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn
- assessment is used consistently well to plan tasks which extend pupils' abilities, particularly the more able.
- Extend opportunities for key subject leaders to monitor and support teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

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

Pupils enjoy their time at school and show positive attitudes to learning. School assessments, pupils' work and the lessons seen indicate that attainment is average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 4.

Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because of the well planned opportunities they have to discuss their learning. Pupils enjoy reading the range of texts available and benefit from the focused approach to the teaching of reading. Pupils make good progress in writing and write for different purposes. There were good examples during the inspection of pupils applying and developing their writing skills. For example, pupils in Year 1 wrote clear factual accounts about frogs and tadpoles after being inspired by the tadpoles and attractive books in the room. In a geography topic, Year 4 pupils wrote interesting pieces about the features of Biggleswade.

The school's drive to improve pupils' performance in mathematics is working well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy solving problems through practical investigations. Pupils in Year 2 used different strategies for sorting a collection of coins. In Year 4, pupils worked extremely well in groups and found the perimeter of numerous rectangular items in the classroom. They applied vocabulary and measuring skills well. Most groups of pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Occasionally, the more able pupils are not fully extended in lessons. The very few pupils at an early stage of learning English make rapid gains in acquiring English because of the well-targeted support. Any variation in attainment between boys and girls is not significantly different from the national picture.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration for others and strong relationships. They feel extremely safe and well cared for at school and are confident that there is always a trusted grown up they can turn to if they are worried or upset. Their conduct is usually outstanding because of high expectations set by all staff. Pupils take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council and they support those less well off by raising funds for national and overseas charities. They are well prepared for the future and their economic well-being. Their personal and social skills are well developed. They are making good progress in applying literacy and numeracy skills. Attendance levels are broadly average.

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.

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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	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	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?

Classrooms are attractive and stimulating with learning prompts and good-quality displays of pupils' work. Most teachers convey to pupils what they are expected to learn at the start of the lesson. When this does not happen, the focus of the lesson is less clear. Teachers' demonstrations, explanations and instructions are effective and informative for pupils. Teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge the pupils' thinking and check their understanding. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss their work. Most pupils make good progress in lessons and enjoy their learning because teachers set tasks that are usually well suited to their abilities. However some activities are insufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able pupils. Those who need additional support with language, literacy or numeracy receive good guidance from teaching assistants.

The curriculum promotes good academic progress and contributes well to pupils' personal outcomes. Good attention is given to developing reading, writing and mathematical skills. Initiatives to further develop pupils' literacy skills are well suited to their needs. The practical and investigative approach to mathematics adds meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Provision for art and design is strong and there are examples of pupils' high quality artwork around the school. A new pond and a garden area are used well for environmental and science work. Clubs such as premier sports, football and gymnastics are enjoyed by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school's ethos. The well-organised, very safe and secure environment provided is recognised by pupils, parents and carers. Parents commented, 'Teachers are always very approachable' and 'the staff are

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fantastic'. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully assessed and their support programmes ensure that they make good progress. There are first rate procedures to foster good behaviour and the school works hard to promote good attendance. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are successfully supported in the nurture group. Productive partnerships have been formed with the partner schools including the Children's Centre setting. As a parent commented, 'Transition is handled very well so children go on to the next phase with confidence'. The school is particularly successful, together with other agencies, in supporting pupils and their families needing extra help.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

An experienced headteacher provides good vision and educational leadership. Staff are hardworking and supportive of each other. They show a clear commitment to raising pupils' achievement, continuous improvement and doing the very best for all pupils. The office manager and support staff are effective in their roles and this enables the headteacher and senior staff to concentrate on teaching, learning and the curriculum. Planning and action to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' writing and the curriculum have been successful. Leaders and managers are keen to further improve aspects of teaching.

Governors work closely with the headteacher and staff and many are very involved in the life of the school. They are supportive and provide constructive challenge in order to hold the school to account. All statutory requirements are met and considerable emphasis is placed on safeguarding. Policies and practice to protect and safeguard children are robust, simple and highly effective. All staff are very well trained in this area and safe practices are promoted through the curriculum.

Equality is promoted successfully and the staff strive to ensure that all groups do as well as they can. The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and promotes community cohesion well. Different culture and religions are promoted well through the curriculum and the school has plans to further extend opportunities to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider global community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership, teamwork and a more settled staff have brought about considerable improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Successful induction procedures, good partnerships with parents and with Lawns Children's Centre enable children to settle quickly. Children make good progress in their personal and social development because of the positive relationships between staff and children. They feel very safe, secure and well cared-for because of the very good attention given to care and welfare. Children relate well to others and their behaviour is consistently good.

An interesting range of learning activities is provided around themes such as ourselves, mini beasts and traditional tales. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning. Assessment information is used well to plan teaching and learning. Children receive good teaching and there is an effective blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have good opportunities to explore, be creative and to work independently. Adults skilfully integrate language development into most activities. The teaching of letter sounds receives good attention and children are making good progress in acquiring early writing skills. Numeracy skills are also developing well through interesting activities. The outdoor learning areas are spacious and well used but learning activities are not always well linked to the main theme. Similarly, while there are good opportunities for role play, the areas are not always linked to the main topic.

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

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 inspection team received a reasonable response to the survey with about a fifth of parents and carers returning the questionnaire. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned them are very happy with their child's experience at the school. They are particularly pleased with safety in school, the sense of enjoyment, the quality of teaching, the progress their children make and the school's partnership formed with them. As one parent commented, 'I genuinely feel that the school works in partnership with us'. The inspection team agrees with these positive views. A very small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the school informs them well enough about their child's progress. A similar proportion does not believe that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that most pupils are usually extremely well behaved. The very few pupils with challenging behaviour are effectively managed and supported by staff. The school provides opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress each term. Staff are also willing to discuss this with parents at other times.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lawnside 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 242 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	68	13	28	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	12	26	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	47	22	47	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	53	19	40	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	57	18	38	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	43	26	55	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	36	26	55	2	4	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)	19	40	26	55	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	40	26	55	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	34	26	55	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	34	28	60	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	20	43	24	51	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	57	17	36	1	2	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.



6 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lawnside Lower School, Biggleswade, SG18 0LX

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. Yours is a good school. There are some outstanding features.

These are the school's main strengths.

You enjoy school and the activities provided.

The school is a very pleasant place in which to learn.

Children in Reception get off to a good start.

You are making good progress because of the good teaching.

A good range of learning activities is provided including clubs.

Your artwork is fantastic.

You get on well with each other and behaviour is outstanding.

You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.

You feel extremely safe at school because the teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and provide strong support and guidance.

You make positive contributions to the school and to the local community.

The school is well led by your headteacher and she receives good support from other senior staff.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to do a few things to improve areas of the school.

Some of you in Key Stages 1 and 2 could be making even more progress in lessons. We have asked the teachers to make the purpose of the lesson clear, to match the work more carefully to your abilities, especially those of you who find learning easy.

Subject leaders could have more opportunities to see how you are learning in lessons, especially in English and mathematics.

You can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts
Lead inspector

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