

Springfield Lower School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 109514 |
| Local Authority | Bedford |
| Inspection number | 337308 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 July 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Miller |

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 | 294 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ann Robertson |
| Headteacher | Richard Benson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 March 2007 |
| School address | Orchard Street Kempston Bedford |
| Telephone number | 01234 306000 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 18 lessons and 10 teachers were seen. They held meetings with the governing body, staff and the school council. They looked at pupils' work and attended assembly. They talked informally with pupils, and met with parents and carers at the start of the school day and during the sports day activities. School documents were scrutinised including policies, development planning and self-evaluation, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding documents. Minutes of governing body meetings were examined as well as the headteacher's reports to the governing body, local authority reports on the school and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 70 parents and carers and 32 members of staff. The school chose not to issue questionnaires to its pupils as they had only very recently carried out an identical survey of their own; this was made available to inspectors.

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

- the progress the school is making in developing its methods for assessing pupils' work
- the work the school is doing to develop its curriculum and teaching methods to underpin securely pupils' learning and progress
- the ways through which the school's leaders, at all levels, monitor and evaluate the school's work in order to secure further improvement
- whether the pupils' personal development is a developing strength of the school.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average first school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils are from White ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well above average. The largest minority group is of Asian or Asian British ethnicity. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school is involved in a family learning project as part of its extended services to its community. It has achieved Healthy Schools status and gained the International Schools award. During the inspection, the school's normal timetable was not being taught as all pupils were involved in its annual arts week and sports day activities.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. In discussions with inspectors, and through the questionnaires, parents and carers talked about the commitment of the school's staff. This commitment and the school's ethos is epitomised by the words painted above the main doorway into the Reception unit, 'Only those of good heart and spirit may enter here.' Good leadership and a tangible team spirit have secured good and continuing improvement. Conscientious self-evaluation has resulted in the school gaining an accurate understanding of what it does well and what needs to be improved further. Staff build well on their strengths and take decisive action to resolve any weaknesses. The school has established a good, steady track record of success by gradually raising standards since the last inspection. Outcomes are increasingly good for children in the Reception year and pupils' attainment has risen to be above average by the time they reach the end of Year 4. Consequently, pupils achieve well and make good progress from the average standards gained by the start of Year 1. Development planning stresses the importance of making pupils' experience 'an inspiring learning journey', and the school a place where 'We make learning fun!' Pupils rightly confirm that this is the case.

A key to the school's improvement has been the development of its excellent curriculum which is reflected in pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. The school has been at the forefront locally in the establishment of an information and communications technology (ICT) 'learning platform'. This is impacting on positively pupils' learning and enjoyment by improving not only curriculum development but also teachers' planning, record keeping, the development of resources and 'take home tasks' for the pupils. Families have increasing access to this 'learning platform' from their home computers. Teaching is good because improved planning and approaches to assessment are sharpening the ways teachers guide pupils towards their next steps in learning. Pupils are developing well as independent learners and value each other's ideas and contributions to lessons.

During the last year the school has started to introduce a new national strategy for assessing pupils' progress. This approach is augmenting the school's existing systems well and enabling teachers to make increasingly informed judgements about their pupils' attainment and progress. It has made a good start in this, with aspects of reading, writing and mathematics, but not yet science. Marking is regular, but not always consistent between classes and year groups in the balance it achieves. Although encouraging of pupils' efforts, marking is not always precise enough about the next steps for improvement. The school has recognised that, until the current academic year, progress has tended to slow in Key Stage 1. It has recognised that some of its higher attaining Reception children need the additional challenge which national curriculum work brings. Similarly, Year 1 teachers recognise that some other children require the

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continuation of Early Years Foundation Stage teaching and support strategies in some areas.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement fully the school's improvement planning, which underpins pupils' learning and progress, by:
 - establishing, by the Summer Term 2011, the new national strategies for assessing pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science
 - developing a more consistent approach to the use of marking which provides a more balanced approach to giving advice on how to improve learning and encouragement.
- Ensure the implementation of the school's planned development of closer working links between the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes in order to:
 - extend the good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1
 - enable increased opportunities for those children in Reception who are ready for the National Curriculum
 - secure improved support for those pupils in Year 1 who find learning more challenging
 - ensure teaching in both key stages plans work effectively to meet the learning needs of all individual children and pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is currently average by the end of Year 2, and the pupils have made good progress from the below expected attainment for their age on entry to Reception. The good progress now being made across all year groups results from more accurate tracking systems. These are identifying early any underachievement and effective support programmes are being quickly put in place. Attainment by Year 4 is now above average. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and/or talented, and those for whom English is an additional language, make particularly good progress. The school monitors and evaluates well the performance of its different groups of pupils. Consequently, those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

The ways by which learning and progress are being enhanced by the school's excellent curriculum was evidenced from the work scrutiny and all lessons seen. Year 1 work on the music of seaside poetry, was preparing pupils creatively for their forthcoming trip to Cromer. Good moral and social development was shown by pupils setting their own well-considered rules for the trip. Year 2 writing books demonstrated good creativity and historical understanding in the letters pupils wrote to King Richard when applying to become knights. The good development of pupils' computer skills was seen in a Year 3 lesson, where pupils' mathematical, religious and design skills were being applied well in

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creating symmetrical designs for a prayer mat. Year 4 pupils also used their mathematical knowledge of symmetry to good effect when discussing how best to undertake their watercolour paintings of reflections, based on Venetian buildings. Enrichment for gifted and/or talented pupils was seen in a joint lesson with a partner school. Well above average observational drawings were being used to inform large scale print designs based on the work of the artist Rousseau.

Pupils' future prospects are being strengthened by their good personal development and attitudes and approaches to learning. Although attendance is average, it has been affected by inclement weather and some illness. There are good levels of cooperation between pupils. Class and group discussions show they respect each other's views and opinions. This enhances well their learning and enjoyment. The practice of healthy lifestyles was seen to very good effect during the sports day activities. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are keen to take on responsibility. They have an increasing appreciation of their wider responsibilities within both the school and broader community; in this they are being prepared well as future citizens. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of European culture through strong exchange links with an Italian school. An outstanding Year 4 lesson, on the artist Canaletto and musician Vivaldi was conducted entirely in Italian with excellent participation and the tangible enjoyment of the pupils.

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 | 2 |
| 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 | 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 |

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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| | |
|--|----------|
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
|--|----------|

How effective is the provision?

All parents responding to the questionnaire feel the school keeps their children safe, and this is confirmed by discussions with pupils. This is also indicative of the good care and pastoral support provided by adults at the school. Working relationships between staff and pupils are good. This is reflected well in the pupils' good attitudes to learning. The development of good links with parents, for example through the use of ICT (the learning platform) and the family learning project, are becoming increasingly successful. Strong partnerships with other schools, education providers and other agencies support pupils' learning and development well.

The school has taken the first steps to improving its provision further through the development of its excellent curriculum. The outstandingly creative nature of the curriculum enables pupils to make relevant links between subjects and use skills and knowledge gained in one area to support effectively their learning in others. Pupils have good attitudes to school because what they are learning makes sense and is highly relevant to them. Good teaching and the expertise of teaching assistants support well the pupils' learning. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities appreciate that their teachers have much to offer them and benefit well from their professional knowledge and individual expertise. The school has plans in place to improve assessment systems and recognises the need for more consistent marking. However, good provision overall contributes significantly to the school being a happy, productive community where pupils thrive.

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 | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads very well by example and his positive encouragement of staff. This has fired ambition in the school's other leaders. Senior and middle leaders are trusted to do their job, and rise to the challenge. Those with more experience support well those who are relatively new to their posts. Effective teamwork is ensuring that action planning is focussed well on the pupils' learning and progress, throughout the school. Teachers take their professional development seriously. They show a commitment to improvement through their ongoing development of assessment

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systems. Staff are well-focussed on sharing and exploring good practice; they are constructively self-critical and have high expectations of each other. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. It provides effective support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and ensures that no discrimination of any kind takes place. Its planning to develop assessment systems and improve further pupils' progress from Reception into Key Stage 1 is designed well to overcome any remaining variations in performance.

The governing body fulfils its role well. All governors have good links with specific classes and subjects and the majority are able to visit the school regularly. Good working relationships with staff, and comprehensive reports from the headteacher ensure they are informed fully about the life of the school. The contributions to reviews and subsequent action planning by the more experienced governors are helpful and appreciated by staff. The governing body's own action plan is focussed well on enabling all governors to help shape the vision and direction of the school. The safeguarding of children is good and there are comprehensive systems for reviewing risks. The child protection governor takes the role very seriously and is ensuring effective monitoring. There is very good attention to ensuring a safe environment for the pupils. The inspection drew some minor administrative matters to the attention of the school but these were resolved quickly.

Community cohesion is good and the school operates as a harmonious community. It has established good links within its local community and international links are excellent. Eleven Year 4 pupils were involved recently in an exchange trip to their partner school in Italy. The school is in the process of establishing links with a school in Birmingham to aid pupils in their broader understanding of contemporary British society. It is working towards a Fair Trade award and establishing links with a local credit union to aid further its provision for the pupils' future economic well-being.

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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |

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

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception year is below expectations for their age. Children respond well to the school environment and the ways staff work with them. Teaching is good and working relationships with families often exemplary. Consequently, children's early progress in their social development is rapid and this provides a firm basis upon which their other learning may develop. Achievement is good and by the end of the year children's attainment is average overall across the Early Learning Goals. The attainment of girls is currently above average in terms of their social and emotional development. Both boys and girls are attaining well in their use of number and in terms of their physical development.

School data shows children's attainment by the end of Reception has been improving year-on-year and is now close to above average. Good new assessment systems, introduced this current academic year have resulted in increased challenge for the children. This is raising standards. Good leadership and organisation across the key stages has resulted in planning for further improvement. The school has finalised new approaches to restructure provision from September 2010 in the Reception and Year 1 classes. This is in order to extend and share existing good practice, improve support for pupils who find learning more difficult in Year 1 and provide additional challenge to foster improved progress in the Reception year.

Provision in the Reception classes is good. Work on phonics, letters and sounds has a high profile in everyday activities and is helping to improve attainment in literacy. Resources are good and used well. Planning shows there is a very good balance of adult led, child initiated, and indoor and outdoor activities. Children are polite and inquisitive and enjoy discovery, such as finding out about minibeasts through looking at bugs through a magnifying glass. They appreciate each other's achievements, as when successfully singing and beating untuned percussion instruments in unison or using woodworking tools successfully. They do have great fun in learning.

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

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The very large majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire, and those who talked with inspectors, are entirely supportive of the school. There is a strong appreciation of its work, its care for their children, and the quality of its teaching and leadership. No major concerns were raised by any significant numbers of parents. The very few individual written concerns reflected matters already taken up with the school. A few parents felt that their children were not making enough progress, but inspectors find progress is now good in all year groups.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Springfield 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 294 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 53 | 76 | 15 | 21 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 49 | 70 | 21 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 38 | 54 | 30 | 43 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 41 | 59 | 25 | 36 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 44 | 63 | 25 | 36 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 39 | 56 | 27 | 39 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 41 | 59 | 24 | 34 | 3 | 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) | 39 | 56 | 27 | 39 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 40 | 57 | 26 | 37 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 34 | 49 | 35 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 29 | 41 | 37 | 53 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 42 | 60 | 27 | 39 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 46 | 66 | 23 | 33 | 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

| 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.



15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springfield Lower School, Bedford, MK42 7LJ

One of the first things we saw when arriving at your school was a poster advertising your 'Shine Week' where your teachers challenged you to 'Show us what you can do!' You did indeed rise to that challenge and we would like to thank you for your enthusiasm and the way you welcomed us into your school. Yours is a good school, and these are some of the things we found are best about it.

You get a good start to your education in the Reception classes.

You have good teachers who help you to make good progress.

Your behaviour is good, you help each other and you really want to learn.

Your lessons are made interesting through excellent topics.

Together with your teachers, you have great fun in learning.

The adults at your school take good care of you so you stay safe.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors lead your school well.

You play an important role in making school life an enjoyable experience.

Your teachers are always looking for ways to make your learning more enjoyable and to help each one of you individually. During this last year they have been developing extra ways to improve their marking of your work and their assessment of your progress.

They have also been working on plans for the Reception and Year 1 classes to work together more closely. We agree they are on the right track and have asked them to put their plans into action from the start of the next school year.

There are a great number of posters on the walls of your school and we know you take note of their messages. Some of you in Year 4 pointed out one relating to your work on the explorer Shackleton, 'Have you got what it takes to join the Team?' You also understand the importance of the words on a poster in the hall saying, 'Life is also about giving back.' Please continue to ask yourselves such questions, support each other in your life and work, and give of your best as you continue to learn.

With all best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller
Lead inspector

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