

Clipstone Brook Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109521
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337310
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Luker
Headteacher	Angie Hardy
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight teachers in 16 lessons or parts of lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff pupils, the school improvement partner and the school's ethnic minority and Traveller achievement service partner. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books and a range of school documentation, policies, monitoring records and data on pupils' attainment. They received and analysed 23 parental questionnaires.

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

- improvements in attendance
- girls' attainment, especially in mathematics
- support for pupils learning English as an additional language and for those from the Travelling community.

Information about the school

Clipstone Brook Lower is smaller than most other primary schools. Pupils come mainly from the local urban area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but a small proportion are from minority ethnic groups, including a very few who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion attending from the Travelling community fluctuates between 3 to 15 pupils, from week to week. Three pupils are partly educated at other schools, so are dual registered. There is a well-above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and an above-average proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has Healthy Schools status and has gained the Activemark and the Intermediate International Schools awards.

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

Clipstone Brook provides a good quality of education for its pupils. They are enthused by learning and life within a lively community that reflects positive values. Parents greatly appreciate the school's work typically saying, 'It provides a caring, supportive environment to educate the pupils.'

The astute and innovative headteacher seeks any external initiatives, including those that come with funding, to benefit the pupils no matter how diverse their circumstances or learning needs. The staff and governors work closely together to maintain a strong focus on enabling the best possible pupil outcomes and the schools' ongoing drive to achieve even better outcomes.

Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery and for those who start in the Reception class is well-below age-related expectations in all areas of learning. They make good progress, notably in their speaking, listening, number work, physical development and in making friends. The high proportion of children with special educational needs also make good progress from their lower starting points. This success is due to good systems which enable early recognition of often significant needs. These are addressed with well-targeted school and external support, so that pupils learn how to learn. As they move through Key Stage 1, pupils are mostly at national averages, especially in writing, reading and mathematics with a few making faster progress. Pupils from the Travelling community and those pupils learning English benefit from intensive one-to-one support, enabling their good progress. Attainment accelerates through the school, so that by the end of Year 4, a small but growing proportion of pupils are working at levels that are above age-related expectations. This is due to good and increasingly outstanding teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Younger pupils make good progress in practical science, but this is not always reflected in their written investigations. Assessment of progress in science is not yet established. Pupils also have too few opportunities to write using pens.

Significant aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding, including their adoption of 'Food Dudes', an initiative which successfully encourages pupils to eat fruit and vegetables. Pupils behave exceptionally well and are extremely understanding of the very few who occasionally have a bad day. They feel very safe because staff take speedy action if needed. Everyone is valued and supported, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Pupils contribute very well to school life suggesting improvements that are usually taken up, such as the 'trim trail'. They enjoy learning about other cultures and lifestyles in the very wide and carefully adapted curriculum. Pupils like the way that teachers make learning fun and respond well by rising to the many challenges set. They do not always work independently when trying

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to improve their work because marking is inconsistent in providing helpful guidance. Staff and governors are keen to extend their expertise through further training. Self-evaluation by senior leaders is accurate. Given this, with improving attendance and the successfully achieved outcomes for pupils, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise standards by:
 - introducing opportunities in all subjects for pupils to use pens when writing
 - developing pupils' recording skills in science in Years 1 and 2
 - establishing the assessment of pupils' progress in science to raise individual achievement
- Using existing good practice, improve the quality of marking so that it more consistently informs pupils of what they need to do to improve their work and guides their next steps in learning.
- Increase the already good skills of staff and governors by making best possible use of available training opportunities to further impact on the school's performance.

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

Pupils arrive with huge smiles, eager to know what the day has in store for them and ready to work hard. Their attendance continues to improve and is satisfactory. They enjoy learning and work hard with excellent attitudes, concentration and behaviour from the earliest age, showing positive determination to succeed when work is often challenging. This was seen in a mathematics lesson when older pupils, including girls, made angles of less or more than ninety degrees, using resources to build, for example, an isosceles triangle and solving increasingly challenging problems accurately. At the end of the lesson the teacher challenged each pupil to identify obtuse and acute angles and pupils then began independently to assess the degree of each angle. One pupil said rightly that a straight line represents 180 degrees. Every pupil had completely and confidently grasped the mathematical concept.

A group of girls said that 'Working hard makes us hungry so we always eat healthily.' Pupils also show excellent involvement in sporting activities including swimming and in using the 'trim trail' that they designed to increase their co-ordination and balance skills. Pupils readily help each other including those who are working hard to overcome personal or academic challenges. Their excellent behaviour means that incidents of bullying are exceptionally rare and when they do very occasionally occur are resolved quickly. Use of exclusion is very significantly reduced because the tiny minority of pupils with extreme difficulties are very well supported and helped to improve. Pupils from different backgrounds get on exceptionally well.

Pupils are set individual personal and learning targets that have a positive impact on their independent reasoning skills. There is no significant difference between the

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performance of girls and boys in mathematics. All pupil groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Younger pupils have good opportunity to conduct science investigations but there is little emphasis on recording written predictions, findings and conclusions. Writing content is often good, particularly poetry, but pupils do not routinely use pens in all subjects to practise and improve their writing and presentation.

Pupils make an impressive contribution to school life and to that of the local and global community with, for example, positive links to schools in Canada and other countries, growing fruit and vegetables for their families and community members and in considerable fundraising. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is evident in the way that pupils respect each other and in lessons that have real spirituality and wonder, for example, when pupils observe and handle young chicks. Pupils also achieve personal and academic targets that help them to overcome individual difficulties.

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

How effective is the provision?

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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Teaching is good with staff teamwork and support for individual pupils a very clear strength. A small proportion of outstanding teaching was seen in the teaching of mathematics, English and practical science, where subject knowledge, high expectations and precise challenges led to an exhilarating pace of learning that inspired pupils to excel. Support staff are well trained and understand pupils' needs and how they prefer to learn, helping them to fill any gaps in learning. Teachers use good questioning and use of ongoing assessment in lessons to constantly gauge pupils' understanding and progress. Pupils who start to drop behind are quickly identified and provided with the right sort of intervention work to prevent any further decline. Lesson planning is good and builds on prior learning. Staff have yet to start assessment of pupils' progress in science. Some, mostly more recent, marking is good with clear pointers to help pupils improve their own work, but this is not consistent across the school. Peer assessment is securely in place and used positively by pupils.

The excellent curriculum is flexible and thoroughly adapted to meet the very diverse needs of pupils, including those who are Travellers or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This flexibility allows for identified pupils to have individual tuition plans, or be dual registered with strong curriculum links between different schools and, in exceptional circumstances, to provide part-time learning. There is a good focus on different styles of learning that helps pupils to learn at a faster rate and a very well balanced mix of practical and more academic activities. Topic work is well embedded so pupils can develop their interests and learning is increasingly led by pupil choices. Information and communication technology is used very well in different subjects as are literacy and numeracy. There is excellent enrichment with many clubs available including street dance, tennis, rugby and netball. Visits and visitors further enhance pupil's personal development and understanding of other cultures.

Pastoral care and support are outstanding. Perceptive staff know pupils and their families extremely well and are very successful at working closely with them including families with less positive experiences of their own education. This ensures that barriers to learning are removed, enabling pupils to learn. As a result, attendance is improving with support available for the very few families who struggle to get their children to school. Pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable are closely supported and encouraged to learn. Transition from one school to another is well-planned at all stages so that children settle quickly and older pupils are carefully prepared to move on to middle school.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The open leadership of the headteacher provides excellent direction, impetus and realistic ambition closely shared with senior leaders, governors and staff to raise standards to even higher levels.

Staff and governors are keen to extend their good management skills and expertise but do not always find relevant training easy to come across or access. Nonetheless, governors have good awareness and understanding of the school's standards and performance and readily challenge senior leaders. Safeguarding procedures are good and exceed government requirements, particularly in provision for pupils and families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and in providing detailed assessments of risks not only for visits but also for individual pupils.

Parental partnerships are excellent and the headteacher makes time to see parents who 'drop in'. This is greatly valued. Highly successful support secured from different agencies impacts very positively on pupils' learning and well being. The school also reaches out to other partners to secure considerable additional funding to enhance pupils' learning experiences.

Promotion of community cohesion, based on a detailed audit and plan, is excellent. The school's work is changing perceptions of education locally and in the wider community particularly in its support for the Travelling community and its heritage. The school is developing its international curriculum which parents are supporting by providing resources and running foreign language clubs. Pupils have visited Bedford to learn more about different faiths. Equality of opportunity is promoted well so that individuals are valued and respected. They make good progress with some that is outstanding. Pupils are confident and secure within an environment that does not allow any form of racism or discrimination. Financial matters are very carefully audited and reviewed so the budget is now in a much better position than in recent years.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy their start to school life, settling quickly and very happily, because there are good transition arrangements with families. They enjoy an imaginative range of well-planned activities that extend well to the outdoor classroom and develop good basic skills from very low starting points, although they take longer to build confidence in their early mark making and calculation skills. There is a well-balanced mix of adult-initiated and child-led activities. Children's behaviour, even of the very youngest, is impressive and they follow instructions quickly because staff expectations are so high. Children concentrate well. They become absorbed in learning letters, sounds and words and enjoy listening to, and asking questions, about the story read at the end of the day. The staff have good skills in developing young children's learning and in meeting individual needs, so that teaching is clearly focused on developing a wide range of personal and social skills and enjoyment of learning. Teaching and learning proceed at a good pace so that children develop well personally and academically. Daily assessment is noted with planning reviewed, so that children progress well and are promptly supported if needed. Parents are fully involved in, and informed, about their children's learning each day. Leadership and management are good with staff contributing to future development planning.

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

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, all express complete satisfaction with their children's enjoyment of school, knowing they are safe and rightly think that teaching, pupil progress and the school's leadership and management are good. They feel well supported in helping their children to learn and feel that the school listens to their views and meets their children's needs, including transition arrangements. The vast majority think their children have healthy lifestyles and that they get enough information about progress. A few expressed reservations about

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behaviour. Nonetheless, all are happy with the education provided. The inspectors agree with parents' very positive views. Inspection findings showed behaviour to be one of several outstanding features of school life.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clipstone Brook 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	43	13	57	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	74	6	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	61	8	35	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	30	15	65	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	39	14	61	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	30	16	70	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	57	9	39	1	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)	8	35	15	65	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	35	15	65	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	43	9	39	3	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	22	16	70	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	43	12	54	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	54	10	43	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.



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clipstone Brook Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3PG

Thank you for giving us such a friendly welcome when we visited your very happy school recently. You go to a good school and you told us why you enjoy it so much. You really like working on computers, writing poetry, sports, reading and practical lessons. You feel very safe and have many good friends. We can see that you try always to do your best and that you like and respect your teachers.

You make good progress because your teachers and teaching assistants make learning fun and work hard to help you learn new things. They ask many difficult questions that really make you think and set work that helps you to learn even more.

Your behaviour, attitudes and the way you care about each other is excellent. Well done! Your attendance is improving, because your families know it is important for you to be at school. You are doing well at school. I really enjoyed the science lesson when you learnt so much about the baby chicks' life cycle and we could all hold and look closely at them.

Your headteacher and the staff want to make your school even better. I have asked them to:

- make sure that you start using pens when doing writing in all your lessons
- help those of you in Years 1 and 2 to get better at writing about your science investigations
- start looking at how well each of you are doing in science
- always use helpful marking that helps you to understand what to do to make your work better.

I know you will soon achieve the challenges we have set for you and will continue to work hard and enjoy the rest of your time at Clipstone Brook.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead inspector

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