

Kensworth VC Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109602
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337333
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Polly Frazer
Headteacher	Mrs Annelore Kentish
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eleven lessons and observed all four teachers and all three pre-school staff. They held meetings with the headteacher, governors, senior leaders, special educational needs coordinator, middle leaders and staff. They talked to a group of pupils from Years 1 to 4, including some from the school council. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at some documentation including the safeguarding policy and risk assessments. An analysis was made of school data on pupils' attainment and progress, and inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and on display. A scrutiny of 30 questionnaires from parents and carers, and some from pupils and staff was carried out.

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

- How consistently is boys' attainment monitored in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- How effectively do leaders monitor the progress in Key Stage 1 of pupils born in the summer time, poor attendees in the whole school and more able pupils in Key Stage 2.
- How successful is the school using feedback to pupils to increase their rate of progress, especially in reading.
- How effectively is the school's leadership working to develop pupils' understanding of multi-cultural issues in the United Kingdom.

Information about the school

Kensworth Lower School is a smaller than an average sized primary school. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school attained Artsmark Silver in 2006 and Active Sportsmark in 2009. A pre-school operates on the school site and it is managed by the governing body so it was inspected as part of this inspection. The pre-school is open during term times only Monday to Friday 9am to 12 noon with a lunch time club available between 12 noon and 1pm. It is registered to take a maximum of 20 children between the ages of two to five years in any one session. Currently 25 children are on roll who attend a variety of sessions during the week and 17 receive government funding.

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

Kensworth Lower School is a good place to learn. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are involved effectively in school life, whether they start at the pre-school or any other year group. This is because the school offers pupils a high level of care and guidance from staff. All pupils are treated as individuals. Pupils work together well and their behaviour is good. They say they enjoy many school activities and topics. For example, several pupils said they really liked the art work they created linked to their studies of different countries such as India. Standards of art are above expectations and many wonderful displays celebrate pupils' achievements. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils made beautiful Indian Mango designs using paint particularly effectively. Pupils' attainment in Year 4 is above expectations and they achieve well from their broadly average starting points. This is due to good quality teaching. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods. Occasionally, the objectives for learning are rather broad and so pupils do not know specifically what skills they are expected to use in each lesson. Pupils do not always have effective opportunities to discuss what they have learnt successfully in each lesson or respond to marking comments and feedback about their work. Most parents and carers are positive about the ways the staff meet their child's needs. One parent summed this up when she wrote, 'We are very happy with our child's overall experience at school.' The school engages with parents and carers satisfactorily, but occasionally information is not explained thoroughly enough. As a result, a few parents and carers do not feel that their ideas are listened to and they do not have an effective understanding of what progress their child has made.

The school's leaders place a high priority on promoting community cohesion. This means that pupils contribute successfully to the community locally and on a world-wide basis. Global issues such as the effect of earthquakes were productively explored when pupils learnt about the Haiti disaster due to very thoughtful leadership from staff. Pupils have been thoughtfully involved in replacing damaged trees in the locality. They raise money for a local hospice which enables them to learn about others who face major challenges in their lives.

Good leadership from the headteacher and her team are wisely driving improvements. The headteacher's leadership motivates others to work together considerately to raise the quality of education. Progress meetings have been introduced but records are not kept which allow staff to evaluate rigorously the impact on pupils' achievement of the strategies they use to support their learning. This means that occasionally leaders are not totally clear about which groups of pupils are underachieving. School data show that there are intermittently bigger gaps between the attainment of boys and girls, than is so nationally. This is because boys' and girls' attainment is not always analysed in each

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year group in detail. As a result, staff do not spot such differences quickly enough. Considerable improvements since the last inspection include a rise in pupils' attainment in Year 4, which is above expectations. Self-evaluation is used well by senior and middle leaders and so the school is in a good position to improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the monitoring of pupils' attainment and achievement throughout the school to maintain or enhance expected levels of attainment by:
 - recording outcomes from pupils' progress meetings more rigorously
 - analysing boys' and girls' attainment even more thoroughly.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by:
 - effectively sharing and using highly specific learning objectives to fully challenge pupils
 - providing high quality opportunities for pupils to discuss how they have been successful in their learning and what they could do to improve.
- Strengthen the systems for communicating with parents and carers by:
 - ensuring parents receive more detailed updates on their child's progress
 - making sure parents are given regular information about successful achievements at school and plans for the future.

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

As a result of good progress, attainment is above expectations by Year 4 in English and mathematics. Teachers' assessments in 2010 and lesson observations show that at least half the Year 4 pupils were working at above expected levels of skill in English and mathematics. Boys' and girls' standards in writing have improved significantly this year because staff have high expectations of pupils. Teachers' assessments from 2009 show that Year 2 boys' and girls' attainment is slightly above average in reading and mathematics and significantly above average in writing. Observations of lessons and the school's data demonstrate that standards for pupils born in the summer are above expectations. In a good English lesson seen pupils focused intensely and with great enthusiasm on learning to write a personal account about being a creature from outer space. Attainment has risen considerably over the last three years. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is monitored carefully and so they achieve well.

Pupils are respectful to others and understand effectively why we say sorry if we have upset someone. Their spiritual development is good. For instance, pupils very reflectively write about their concerns for themselves and take part in church services. Pupils feel safe in school. For example, they are clear how to keep themselves safe whilst using the internet. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles effectively. A significant proportion of pupils take part in after-school activities as well as two sessions where

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they learn to play games or swim during the school day. They are knowledgeable about foods which are better for them and those which should not be eaten too often. For instance, they are very clear that burgers and chips should not be eaten regularly. They are well prepared for the next stage of education and attendance is average. Pupils concentrate well in lessons because staff work thoughtfully to make learning fun.

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

How effective is the provision?

Good quality teaching and learning ensure pupils progress well. During the inspection, the most successful teaching set high expectations of pupils so that the majority worked at above expected levels of attainment. This meant that pupils developed their key skills effectively. In one good session seen, questioning was used very effectively and so Year 3 and 4 pupils learnt to read and analyse texts in detail. They learned to scan paragraphs and find key pieces of information due to high levels of teacher expertise. Teachers mostly use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning effectively when planning for their next steps. Occasionally, lesson planning does not always ensure different groups of pupils are effectively identified to work at higher levels of skill. This is because

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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senior leaders do not always monitor this successfully.

A high priority is given to the development of language, literacy, numeracy and scientific skills in the school's good curriculum. Children's learning is effectively enriched, for example, by the teaching of French and a specialist teacher effectively promotes their singing skills and musical appreciation. The pupils very much enjoy all the terrific projects planned for them and the special event days. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils value all the interesting topics they learn, such as, projects about Ancient Egypt where pupils made beautiful pieces of model jewellery and researched in detail how the pharaohs lived. . They really enjoy the extra activities offered for sports and music. Pupils learn successfully about Christian and other beliefs in assemblies and religious education sessions because these are well thought out by staff. Provision for the gifted and talented pupils is developing appropriately.

A welcoming and warm atmosphere is visible at the school because pupils receive high levels of care from staff and so relationships are very positive. From the moment pupils start at school, their personal needs are met thoughtfully. For example, pupils successfully develop their awareness of everyday hazards due to visits from the fire and police service. Those from minority ethnic groups are supported effectively and so they are successfully integrated into school life. All pupils' attendance is monitored carefully by school leaders. Pupils from vulnerable circumstances are identified well and they are assisted to make good progress in their personal and academic studies. The school works very carefully with other agencies to increase pupils' well-being. Teaching assistants work skilfully to support all pupils and especially those with additional needs.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school with enthusiasm and great commitment and is ably supported by a dedicated team of staff. All are keen to improve the school and are effectively involved in evaluating the strengths and areas for development at the school. Development planning is thorough and sets clear direction for future improvements in the quality of education but it does not always set measurable criteria against which success will be evaluated. Pupils have equal opportunities to learn because the school works carefully to remove any discrimination or obstacles to learning. This is because staff work methodically to meet pupils' individual needs.

Governance is good and supports the school very effectively. The governing body has

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been highly effective in helping to develop the pre-school and raising numbers of pupils who attend the school. It has a systematic approach to collecting the views of parents and carers by sending them questionnaires to gather ideas. The governing body makes sure child protection and health and safety matters are dealt with astutely. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements well. All staff receive regular training in child protection and thorough records are kept of the checks completed on staff. Risk assessments are carried out methodically. A suitable safeguarding policy is in place.

The school works well to unite the school and wider community. For example, pupils successfully baked cakes and perform plays for older people in the local community. The school has evaluated all aspects of community cohesion rigorously and is developing further links to deepen pupils' understanding of how to compare and contrast different cultures in the United Kingdom from first-hand experiences.

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	3
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into school life quickly because staff gather information methodically from parents and carers. Children achieve well in the pre-school and Reception year. The children make good progress from their starting points, which are in line with expectations. This means that standards are above average by the end of Reception. The children develop their basic skills effectively because staff use resources well. Children progress well in pre-school due the use of practical teaching methods. For example, they learn to make up stories about life at sea because a model boat is used creatively. In a good lesson seen, children in Reception learnt to read effectively because the teacher showed them how to link the letters to the sound they make.

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Learning journals are used successfully to record the skills and knowledge children have mastered. Occasionally, the next steps children will take in their learning are not recorded fully nor shared with parents and carers effectively.

The children's personal, social and emotional development is good because all adults ensure that the welfare of each individual is supported carefully. Children are encouraged to be independent and behaviour is good. The leadership of this stage of education is good. Boys' and girls' attainment is monitored appropriately but occasionally the starting points of groups are not looked at fully to establish their strengths and areas of learning which would benefit from extra input. Routines are thoughtfully established by leaders but there is a little too much time spent on child-initiated learning and not enough on adult-led sessions where key skills are developed. This means that occasionally not all children are effectively involved in a focused activity during a daily session.

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

Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed a high level of satisfaction with their child's progress and enjoyment of school and the quality of teaching. A few parents and carers from the main school and pre-school said they would like more information about how much progress their child is making and the school is already looking into this. A significant proportion expressed concern about the school's leadership and management but the inspection did not find suitable evidence to support this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kensworth VC 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 inspector received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 59 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	73	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	43	13	43	2	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	40	13	43	4	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	57	12	40	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	53	13	43	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	43	14	47	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	50	10	33	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)	16	53	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	60	11	37	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	40	17	57	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	27	14	47	3	10	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	6	20	15	50	7	23	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	50	12	40	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.



16 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kensworth VC Lower School, Dunstable, LU6 3RH

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking with some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. Positive things about your school include.

You make good progress in your work.

You behave well in school.

Your headteacher and teachers have good ideas about ways to improve the school.

Teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting.

Staff care and support you well and listen to you thoughtfully and so you feel safe in school.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important matters are to:

- make sure staff explain to you more fully what skills you could use in lessons and discuss your successes in detail so that you reach even higher levels of knowledge and understanding
- ensure staff watch over your progress in key areas of learning even more carefully
- make sure that the school tells your parents and carers about your progress and what plans it has to improve the school in the future.

Continue to listen carefully to staff comments, come to school everyday and enjoy all the super things you are learning at Kensworth VC Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector

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