

Wilstead Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109492
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288398
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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 on roll	126
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Mathers
Headteacher	Mrs Janine Cox
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002
School address	Cotton End Road Wilshamstead Bedford Bedfordshire MK45 3BX
Telephone number	01234302303
Fax number	01234302303

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small village school serves pupils from a wide catchment area. Most are from White British families and the remainder consists of a wide range of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are hardly any who speak English as an additional language and the proportion identified with learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than in most schools. Children start school in Reception at levels that are broadly average for their age. They leave at the end of Year 4. A new headteacher started in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's view that its effectiveness is good and that it provides good value for money. The school enjoys good support from parents who are largely happy with what is done for their children. They are especially pleased about the good care, support and guidance that their children receive. Pupils' positive attitudes to their work and their education generally make a major contribution to their progress. Their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils attend school regularly and enjoy their lessons. They know how to keep safe and healthy and make a good contribution to their school and local community.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their pupils well and make sure they receive just the right sort of work to help them take the next steps in their learning. Pupils relish the challenging targets set for them and eagerly try to improve their work, responding well to teachers' helpful comments in their books. Children receive a good start to their education in Reception, where they quickly become accustomed to routines and expectations. Although children are assessed when they start school and throughout the Reception year, the information is not used well enough to ensure that weaker areas of their learning are given sufficient attention. Despite this, most meet nationally expected goals by the time they move up to Year 1. This good progress continues as pupils become older and standards in the national assessments in Year 2 are higher than in most schools. Overall achievement is good by the end of Year 4, with most pupils leaving the school at levels higher than those normally found in pupils of their age. They have a secure grounding in the basic skills which stands them in good stead for their future education. A good curriculum provides many interesting and stimulating opportunities for pupils to enjoy. However, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is not planned well enough across the curriculum and hinders progress in a range of different subjects.

Pupils' personal circumstances and academic achievements are well known to staff. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified early and their needs accurately assessed. This provides the basis for effective school support, both in and out of the classroom and ensures that these pupils make effective progress. Parents appreciate this greatly. One noted on the questionnaire that her son had settled into school quickly and was making good progress 'due to the positive attitudes of all staff and the preparation made before he started school'.

The school is well led and managed. There are effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and achievements. Consequently the school has an accurate view of its performance and can prioritise areas for improvement accurately. Some of the issues identified at the last inspection have been tackled successfully, including improving attendance, which is now good. However, the role of subject coordinators is still under-developed and as a result, they are not yet having a strong enough impact on improving standards and teaching. Nonetheless, the clear vision of the headteacher coupled with the support and commitment of her staff provide good capacity to improve in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan the use of ICT more effectively to support pupils' learning in different subjects.
- Fully develop the roles of subject coordinators so that they take more responsibility for improving standards and teaching.
- Analyse information about children's achievements in the Reception class more carefully to ensure that weaker areas of learning are given sufficient attention.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children begin in Reception at levels which are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress and, by the time they transfer to Year 1, most meet nationally expected goals. They do especially well in their social development, reading and in their knowledge and understanding of the world but less well in writing and creative development. Their good progress continues through Years 1 and 2, with pupils achieving well and reaching standards in the Year 2 national assessments that are higher than in most schools. In 2006, standards were exceptionally high, with all pupils reaching nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. A very good proportion reached higher levels. Pupils continue to build well on their existing skills and knowledge in Years 3 and 4, leaving the school at levels which are higher than those normally seen in pupils of their age in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They have strong moral values and very good social awareness. Pupils work and play well together and value each other's ideas and opinions. However, their understanding of cultural diversity in modern day British society is not sufficiently well developed. Most pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and behave extremely well. They say that bullying is very rare and, if it does occur, is dealt with quickly. They know how to keep safe and understand clearly the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They are proud of their work on the new school council, especially their efforts to improve the quality of school meals. They support charities and make a positive contribution to the village community by performing in concerts and participating in festivals and celebrations. Good basic skills and personal qualities give them a secure platform for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well at Wilstead because of good teaching. Teachers show great care and concern for pupils and plan lessons which provide good levels of challenge for those who are more able and support for those who learn at a slower rate. Teachers remind pupils regularly of their individual targets and refer to them when marking their work. Consequently, pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve. Teachers use a good range of questions to stimulate pupils to think carefully. Pupils respond well, eagerly offering their ideas and explaining their opinions. In most lessons, teachers use a wide variety of strategies to capture pupils' interest and concentration. They often use computer technology to illustrate teaching points and help make learning exciting. Pupils respond well to this, eagerly offering their ideas and taking an active part in their learning. However, in a few cases, teachers spend too much time talking to pupils without involving them actively. This results in pupils losing concentration and this affects their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. Interesting project work and a satisfactory range of out-of-school activities enhances pupils' learning. Themed days and weeks such as 'Brain Week' add further excitement and enjoyment to their experience at school. The curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to enjoy hands-on experience and this helps them understand and remember new concepts. In Year 2, for example, pupils measure each other's height and weight, represent their findings on a graph and consider if there is any relationship between them. The use of ICT has been strengthened since the last inspection, but pupils are still not using computers well enough to support their work in different subjects. Effective programmes are provided to meet individual learning needs and to support pupils who have fallen behind where they should be for their age.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Adults know pupils well and keep a close watch on their welfare. Health and safety requirements are thorough. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting children meet current requirements and are understood by all staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in lessons and in small groups outside class where they get a chance to catch up on gaps in their learning. The school liaises effectively with outside agencies to provide them with further advice about how best to support pupils' needs. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and effective guidance is given about how they can improve. Target setting procedures are well established and give pupils clear goals at which to aim. These are reviewed regularly to ensure that pupils' motivation remains high. In Reception, whilst children's attainment on entry and subsequent progress are assessed appropriately, this information is not analysed sufficiently to identify areas of learning where more support is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. It runs smoothly and good procedures are in place to care for pupils and keep them safe. The new headteacher has made a sensitive yet very positive start and has gained the respect and trust of all members of the school community. Some improvements have already been made, for example the establishment of a school council, which is having a good effect on pupils' sense of community and responsibility. School performance is analysed carefully, with regular checks on teachers' work and the impact this has on pupils' achievements. This identifies priorities for future improvement. Subject coordinators monitor teachers' planning and sample pupils' work but their roles are not clear enough to ensure they take a direct responsibility for improving teaching and raising standards. The governing body does a good job in planning for and monitoring finances and improvements in the premises but is less effective in monitoring the curriculum.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wilstead Lower School, Wilstead, Bedford MK45 3BX

Thank you all so much for your warm welcome during our recent visit. My colleague and I enjoyed spending time in your school, watching you working in lessons and chatting with you in the playground and the dining hall. Everything we saw and heard convinced us that you go to a good school.

These are some of the things we really liked.

- You all work hard and achieve well - you reach higher standards than children of similar ages in other schools.
- The teaching is good and you learn lots of new skills.
- You are growing up as confident, polite young people who behave extremely well, enjoy learning and know how to keep safe and healthy.
- Adults organise lots of interesting experiences for you such as 'Brain Week' which you said was really fun.
- Teachers and other adults take good care of you and give you help if you need it.
- The people in charge do a good job in running the school.

There are a couple of things we think could be even better.

- You need more opportunities to use computers in lessons to help you in other subjects.
- Teachers in charge of different subjects need to keep a closer check on your learning so they can plan how to make things even better.
- Adults need to use the information they have about children's achievements in the Reception class more carefully to make sure they are giving them the right sort of work.

I know you will continue to work hard and support your teachers and other adults. I would like to extend my very best wishes to you all for your future education.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead Inspector