



Downside Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109567
LEA LUTON LEA
Inspection number 278217
Inspection dates 2 February 2006 to 3 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Ian Nelson LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chaul End Lane
School category	Community		LU4 8EZ
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582593460
Number on roll	257	Fax number	01582593460
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Syed Rizvi
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Susan Lewis

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 2 February 2006 - 3 February 2006	Inspection number 278217
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school serving an area with many social and economic disadvantages. The number of children eligible for free school meals is well above average. Nearly all the children are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani. Nearly all are at an early stage of acquiring English. An average number of children have special educational needs. Children start pre-school at three years old with very limited knowledge and skills. The school is part of the 'Flying Start' project which aims to help children get a good start to their education. It is also part of the 'Healthy Schools' programme, and the 'Better Reading' partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an accurate view of how well it is doing. The children make good progress from a very low starting point because teachers understand their needs and how to meet them. Children make good progress through nursery and reception because they are taught well. However, they enter Year 1 with very low standards in most areas of learning. Teaching in Year 1 and 2 is also good and children make good progress. Standards in the Year 2 assessments, although rising year by year, remain well below the national average. This is because children do not have a secure understanding of the subject specific language they need to succeed in national assessments. Children's personal development is good and they behave very well in lessons and around the school. Attendance has improved a lot over the last three years because the school has worked hard to help parents to appreciate the importance of bringing their children to school regularly. Attendance and punctuality is broadly satisfactory. The staff with leadership and management roles carry out their responsibilities well and parents appreciate the open and caring ethos the headteacher has established. The school struggles to fill vacancies on the governing body. Although governors are fully supportive they are not all confident or experienced enough to hold the school to account for its performance. The school has improved standards as well as doing all it can to resolve the issues for improvement from the last inspection and is well placed to get better still. It gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to work closely with the local authority to recruit and train enough governors to improve the effectiveness of the governing body. - Continue to extend children's understanding of the subject specific language they need to do well in national assessments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start nursery with few of the skills expected of their age. Most speak hardly any English when they start. Most have had limited opportunity to interact with other children and adults before joining the neighbouring pre-school. From this very low starting point all children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in learning enough English to get by socially. However, they are not in the school long enough to get a sufficient understanding of the meanings and applications of subject specific terms that they need to succeed in the Year 2 assessments. Consequently, despite the good progress they make, standards in those assessments at age 7 are low though they are rising steadily. Children are meeting the challenging targets their teachers set them. The school's focus on developing children's English language through extensive opportunities for speaking and listening gives them great confidence and enthusiasm for learning. This lays firm foundations for

them to blossom and make rapid progress in the neighbouring junior school and beyond.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave very well, love school and have very good relationships with staff and one another. Year 2 children say, 'We try to help our teachers by being kind and helpful.' As a result, the school is a happy and caring place in which all children make good progress in acquiring the numeracy, literacy and social skills, which will help in later life. Attendance figures have improved very well over the last three years and although they are lower than most schools, attendance and punctuality are broadly average. Children learn how to stay safe which is vital as the school is close to a very busy road. They say there are many adults in school they can turn to if they are unhappy or frightened. Children know that it is important to eat healthy food and to take regular exercise. They enjoy visits from play leaders twice a week to teach them different sports at lunchtime. Year 2 children enjoy being 'Playground Police' and helping others to resolve quarrels. They express their ideas on school issues through the school council. The school is successful in encouraging children to think of others by supporting several charity collections each year. They sponsor a child in South America and parents held a much enjoyed Eid party and raised 1000 pounds for victims of the Tsunami.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Children enjoy learning because teachers generally ensure that lessons are presented in varied and interesting ways. Teachers manage the children's behaviour well and there is a positive atmosphere which helps the children to feel secure and keen to learn. In the Foundation Stage, teachers use the children's own ideas well to develop their learning. The clear focus placed on developing the children's speaking and listening skills is one of the most significant factors in the most effective teaching. In a good Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher was skilled in getting the children to use very good mathematical language such as 'edges', and 'faces' when describing the properties of three-dimensional shapes. The teacher's questioning was very good and she demanded extended answers from the children when explaining similarities and differences between cuboids and spheres. The school rightly recognises that this successful strategy needs to be consolidated and built upon further. Support staff make a strong contribution to the good learning of the many children who are learning English. For example, they note down the children's achievements. These and other assessments of the children's progress are used well to ensure that future lessons are pitched at the right level to match children's learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of learning activities to ensure that all the required subjects are taught. Good adaptations have been made to meet the children's needs, particularly to boost progress in learning English. For example, work in history, geography and information and communication technology are planned effectively to contribute to the pupils' literacy and speaking skills. The school needs to consolidate and build upon these good initiatives to help children learn correct technical terms, use them confidently and apply them correctly. Good planning makes sure that all groups take part in the full range of activities. The school gives children many opportunities for additional activities and visits. These enhance their understanding of particular subjects and increase their enjoyment of school life. For example, when appropriate, visits are made to a mosque, temple and church. In addition a wide range of visitors, particularly theatre groups and musicians, enhance the provision as does the borough's 'Life Bus' that is used to educate pupils in health matters. There is an exceptionally broad range of lunchtime and after school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are rightly pleased about the good levels of care that their children receive. One parent said, 'This school does its very best to take care of every child'. Health and safety and arrangements for protecting children are good and all adults are made aware of their responsibilities. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and enjoy all aspects of school life. Children who find learning hard or have disabilities are well provided for. Their support is well organised and effectively targeted. Arrangements for the pupils' guidance are good. There are good systems in place for checking how well they are progressing and for setting them targets to aim for. Consequently, children know what they need to do to improve. Support for the most vulnerable children is particularly good and is enhanced by the very good work of the family worker. She liaises well with parents and outside agencies to support children and their families. The school works hard to give parents the skills and confidence to help their children to learn at home and needs to build upon this work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The head has established a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff. Consequently they go out of their way to ensure that all children, whatever their background, gender, ability or disability are included in all school activities. Standards and attendance are rising and the school has done all it can to resolve the issues for improvement from the last inspection. Consequently it is well placed to carry on improving. The school has good systems for checking how well it is doing. These ensure it has an accurate grasp of how good it is and how to get better still. All staff are fully involved in reflecting on what is going well and what

could be improved. Staff regularly seek and act upon the views of parents and their children through surveys and through the school council. The result is a clear and detailed school improvement plan outlining priorities and how these will be achieved. The school struggles to fill all the places on the governing body so that too few governors are trying to do too much work. It is working closely with the local authority to resolve this, but some governors are new and awaiting training. While governors are very supportive of the school, some are not confident or experienced enough to get fully involved in checking its performance and asking staff challenging questions about how well it is doing. The school maintains very close links with the neighbouring pre-school and junior school to ensure that the move from one to the other is as easy for children as it can be. The family worker plays a crucial role in getting parents more involved in their children's learning.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school recently. This letter is to tell you what we think about your school. We think you go to a good school. All of the grown ups look after you well. You always have someone to look after you if you are upset. You behave very well and get on well with each other so everyone is happy. You work very hard in lessons so that you learn lots of new things. Teachers make lessons interesting and help you to learn English. They also help you to learn the words you need to do well in tests but some of these are a bit hard for you. Your headteacher leads the school well. She has lots of ideas for making it better still. The school does not have enough governors to do all the jobs they have to do to help the teachers. We have asked the school to get some more governors and to carry on helping you to learn the English you need to do better in your Year 2 tests.