



Newton Blossomville Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110405
Local Authority Milton Keynes
Inspection number 288661
Inspection date 30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Sean O'Toole

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Newton Blossomville
School category	Voluntary controlled		Turvey
Age range of pupils	4-7		Bedford MK43 8AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 881294
Number on roll (school)	19	Fax number	01234 881294
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Swanston
		Headteacher	Mrs Georgina Gunn
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average rural school. Most pupils come from advantaged homes. None are entitled to free school meals. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. Attainment on admission is above average. Until September 2006, when it became an infant school, the school included pupils in Year 3. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents express delight that their children attend this outstanding school. As one wrote, 'It provides a superb foundation for the children and because of its size allows everyone to develop at their own speed, nurturing their creative, individual and expressive characters'. The school is at the heart of this community. It draws on the wealth of expertise and experience in the locality to enhance its work and to create a vibrant and challenging curriculum. Consequently, pupils develop into confident and independent learners who make excellent progress in all aspects of their work. By the time they leave the school they are working at levels which are exceptionally high for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The achievement of pupils of all abilities is outstanding.

There are many contributory factors which enhance pupils' enjoyment of school and their success. Children in the Foundation Stage quickly adjust to working with others and thrive in an environment where learning is fun. They achieve exceptionally well. One parent, echoing the views of many, wrote, 'You soon find out that the school...far exceeds what it is required to do'. The pupils' successes are the result of high quality teaching and learning and an excellent curriculum which prepare them exceptionally well for the future.

Throughout the school, pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living and thoroughly enjoy all of the activities provided. Excellent relationships underpin the happy and purposeful atmosphere in the school and contribute much to pupils' self confidence. The pupils' behaviour is exemplary as are their attitudes to work and one another.

The school benefits from excellent leadership and management. There is a highly effective team of staff who are ambitious for every child to do well. Accurate self evaluation provides the spur for improvement. Staff willingly try out new initiatives such as changing their approach to the teaching of writing and phonics which has contributed much to maintaining high standards. Great strides have been made in improving pupils' work in religious education, although more remains to be done to extend pupils' writing in history and geography. Governors are very supportive but have limited involvement in setting priorities and checking on the school's progress. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher have helped to sharpen up some of the school's practices. Communication with parents is a particular strength and they are wholeheartedly behind the school which is in a very strong position to build on its success.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to develop their writing through subjects such as history and geography.
- Expand the governors' role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children bring a good range of skills when they start school. By the end of the Reception year almost all are working at levels which are in advance of those expected for their age in all of the areas of learning. Children's strong personal, social and emotional development and their highly competent communication skills provide a solid foundation for future learning. Progress continues at a brisk rate and as avid learners the pupils achieve exceptionally well in Years 1 and 2. By the time they leave the school, standards are very high in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has maintained high standards for several years and indicators are that it will meet its ambitious targets again. Much of this success is due to the individual attention given by the staff and their clear understanding of the needs of each individual. Those with learning difficulties make rapid gains because of well focused support and the more able thrive on the challenges set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils are very positive about all aspects of school life and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show high levels of respect for each other, adults and the world around them. They are equipped as highly skilled learners because the curriculum is so relevant to their everyday lives. It contributes much to the way they value their rural community. Pupils develop a keen sense of responsibility and express their opinions clearly through the school council. Recently, at their suggestion, they have seen the playground improved. It is clear from their high level of attendance that they enjoy school and hardly surprising that one parent wrote, 'My daughter says she prefers being at school to her holidays!'

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Right from their start in the Foundation Stage pupils are hard-working, highly motivated and proud of their school. They eagerly produce high quality work and apply their basic skills in researching for topics. They work safely and enthusiastically together and are attentive listeners to staff and their fellow pupils. These qualities prepare them excellently for the next stage of their education. As one girl said, 'It's brilliant here, I learn a lot and the best thing is having lots of friends'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The most typical aspect of the outstanding teaching at this school is the focus on individuals. As one parent said, 'Because our daughter receives so much attention she is progressing really well'. Staff know the pupils and keep a good check on their progress. This includes helpful and constructive marking which guides the pupils on

how to improve. Praise is used much to boost the pupils' confidence and, as a result, pupils are well motivated and effective learners. Those who find learning difficult are given work which is tailored to their needs. Staff willingly try different approaches to capture the pupils' imagination. The recent focus on developing writing and improving the recognition of the sounds that letters make has inspired the pupils to do even better. The teachers are very good at asking questions and encouraging the pupils to have a go. On some occasions teachers talk too much and rely on over simple worksheets which limit opportunities for the pupils to write in depth in subjects such as history and geography. All staff expect the pupils to behave well. By making use of their specialist expertise in subjects such as science and religious education staff move learning on at a brisk pace.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a stimulating curriculum which includes lots of practical experiences and outdoor activities to help them develop personal, academic and physical skills. Sometimes they also benefit from working alongside older children. Following the recent gales the whole school embarked on an adventure to examine the fallen tree in their grounds. This led to excellent written work, scientific investigation and mathematics as they counted the rings on the trunk. Staff are highly skilled in using incidents like this to make learning relevant and to provide opportunities for the pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum is also enriched through visiting experts in physical education, puppeteers, actors and musicians from a variety of cultures and traditions. In planning the curriculum, staff make substantial efforts to enrich the lives of all pupils through stimulating and challenging experiences. Well planned lessons in religious education and personal and social education help the pupils to develop responsible attitudes and firm friendships and relationships which underpin their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

'All the children always look very happy - it is a very happy environment and such a wonderful place', wrote one delighted parent. The staff show high levels of pastoral care and support for the pupils and are very focused on identifying their academic needs. Regular and accurate assessments are used to check on the pupils' progress and to guide staff on planning their work. There is much focus on supporting those with learning difficulties and setting achievable but challenging targets for all. The staff have a thorough knowledge of individuals and keep detailed records. They involve parents in all aspects of their children's development. There are robust procedures to ensure the safety and well being of the pupils and rigorous checks on all working at the school. Up to date knowledge of child protection and effective risk assessments also contribute to the outstanding care, support and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Everyone working at the school shares the belief that each child is important. This common vision, which governors and parents fully support, is at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher has led the school through a time of change and has contributed much to the already high quality of education provided. Throughout the school, there is a lively and focused atmosphere in which children are nurtured and given the confidence and skills to succeed. The school is exceptionally good at involving the parents and wider community. As one parent wrote, 'You are able to approach any member of staff at any time and your views are valued and respected'.

Staff make very effective use of performance data to set the next priorities and to evaluate the school's work. There is a strong sense of team work and governors play their part in supporting the staff. The school's large surplus is being used well to improve the facilities. The governors have been instrumental in moving forward the current building work and are growing in confidence in other aspects of their work. Their role in checking on how well the school is doing and their involvement in self evaluation has been limited. Recent improvements in performance management show that they are well placed to improve these skills.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you for making me feel so welcome on my visit to your school. I really enjoyed talking to the school council and finding out about all of the very interesting ways in which you learn. I know that you love coming to school and that you enjoy your lessons especially when you have opportunities to learn about what is happening in the village. Your work on the fallen tree was really special and I am sure it is something you will always remember.

There are lots of special things about your outstanding school.

- You are really good at reading, writing and mathematics.
- You get on very well together and everyone is kind and helpful.
- Your teachers make lessons fun.
- Everyone in the school works hard to make it a special place.
- The way the school is organised helps you to learn.
- The staff work very hard and plan lots of exciting things for you to learn.
- Your parents are very involved in the school.

I have asked the headteacher and staff to look at ways of making some lessons even better by giving you more opportunities to write about what you are doing in history and geography. You can help by continuing to do your best writing. I have also asked the governors to be more involved in checking on how the school is doing.

It was lovely to meet you. I hope that you will always be as happy at school.

Sean O'TooleLead inspector