



Flamstead Village School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117100
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290720
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Colin Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Trowley Hill Road
School category	Community		Flamstead, Flamstead
Age range of pupils	4–11		St. Albans, Hertfordshire
			AL3 8DL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 840385
Number on roll (school)	114	Fax number	01582 840385
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stephen Meredith
		Headteacher	Mrs Heather Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Children come from the local village and other villages in the area and are from a wide range of social backgrounds. Almost all speak English as their first language. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to many other schools of this size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most but not all children start in the Nursery/Reception class with skills that are typical for this age-group.

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 that serves its community well. It gives good value for money and has a good capacity for further improvement. It is valued highly by pupils and their parents, particularly for its caring, 'family' ethos. This is reflected in a parent's comment that 'the school has a culture of friendship, support and respect amongst staff and pupils that is exceptional'.

Pupils' achievement is good. Nursery and Reception children make a good start in 'Pluto' class because of the effective teaching and interesting range of learning activities. They achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the start of Year 1 and many exceed them. Most pupils continue to make good progress overall throughout the school, although more able pupils do not always make as much progress in some classes as they could. Pupils reach standards that are above average, although there is some yearly variation due to the small numbers of pupils in each year group. Pupils attain consistently well in science, mathematics and reading, but standards are lower in writing as pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about their school, particularly the interesting curriculum and the enjoyable clubs, visits and visitors. Their personal development and well being are good. They have a strong sense of belonging, and attend regularly, and their behaviour in lessons and around school is mostly excellent. Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles and the older pupils enjoy taking particular responsibility for ensuring that the younger ones are safe and happy. The team meetings and school council provide good opportunities for pupils to express their views and contribute well to improving their school. The school's strong focus on supporting each individual pupil is reflected through the good quality care and support it provides, although clear guidance to help pupils improve their work is not consistently given by all teachers.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers manage classes well and there is a happy and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Teachers explain learning points confidently and effectively and give clear instructions, although they do not always challenge more able pupils enough by means of extension activities or by pursuing questions in depth. Assessment procedures are used consistently to evaluate pupils' achievement carefully in key subjects and to inform teaching. Recent assessment initiatives in other subjects, designed to involve pupils more in checking their work, are not developed enough to help raise standards.

Staff changes and the extended absence of the headteacher have hindered aspects of school development. However, the school is now benefiting again from her clear and purposeful leadership. She is supported successfully by an increasingly strong team of staff and governors. The partnership with an effective and influential governing body has enabled the school to develop accurate procedures to check carefully how it is doing and how well pupils are achieving. The school has developed well-organised systems for evaluating how well pupils are performing but some aspects are only

recently established. The school recognises the need to build on these to give a clearer overview of teaching and learning in all subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' understanding of what they need to do to raise their standards in writing.
- Ensure that more able pupils are challenged consistently in lessons to extend their skills and knowledge.
- Improve the use of procedures to assess standards and check on how well pupils are doing in every subject.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of nursery and Reception children entering 'Pluto' class is good. They achieve well in all areas of learning and attain the nationally expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Many exceed these targets. Progress is good overall throughout the school, although more able pupils are not always challenged enough in some lessons. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from effective support and make good progress. Pupils attain above average standards overall at the end of Years 2 and 6, with some yearly variation due to the small numbers involved. Achievement is good in science, reading and mathematics. Achievement is lower in writing, especially for more able pupils in Years 3 to 6, as pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what needs improving and how to achieve it.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strong focus on pupils' personal development helps them to enjoy school, get on well with each other and contribute effectively to the school and village communities. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are eager to learn. This is reflected in their good attendance. Year 6 pupils have some good opportunities to contribute to the school community, particularly through their roles as team captains and vice-captains and members of the influential school council. The manner in which older pupils care for younger ones contributes excellently to the school's caring ethos. Some older pupils are beginning to take increasing responsibility for their learning, for example, by assessing how well they have achieved in a lesson, although this is not developed consistently in all classes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school makes skilful use of assemblies, class and team discussions and a broad range of learning activities to extend pupils' understanding of social and moral issues and different cultural beliefs and practices. Pupils have a clear understanding of the need for safe and healthy lifestyles and their economic well-being is developed successfully by helping to run the school's stationery shop and stalls for PTA events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers manage their classes well and ensure that pupils stay focused on their learning. They organise a good range of interesting learning activities that are valued by pupils, who readily acknowledge that 'lessons are fun!' They use assessment information effectively to inform their teaching and improve weaknesses in pupils' understanding. Teachers are supported well by effective teaching assistants who help pupils to be included fully and achieve well, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers use questions successfully to encourage pupils to contribute their ideas, although more able pupils could be stretched further by being asked more complex questions. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, although this is not helping to raise standards as too few link their comments to pupils' improvement targets or involve pupils successfully in assessing their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for children in the nursery and Reception class and for those in Years 1 to 6 is good. It is a key factor in encouraging pupils' eagerness to learn. The curriculum is planned well to support the achievement of pupils in mixed age classes. Pupils are enthusiastic about their participation in a good range of after school clubs and sporting competitions with other local cluster schools. They value such enrichment activities as the residential trips and the opportunities to learn a musical instrument.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and provide good care and support. These are valued highly by parents and pupils and reflect the school's caring ethos. There are secure systems for ensuring pupils' safety, for example, in the vetting of adults who work in the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. Those with learning difficulties receive strong support and links with appropriate support agencies, such as educational psychologists, are effective. Induction procedures for children first entering the school in Nursery/Reception are very sensible and well-thought out and help them to settle well. Guidance to help pupils improve their academic achievement is developing satisfactorily, although not fully established as yet. However, although pupils have 'must', 'should' and 'could' targets, their understanding of what they have to do next to improve their work is not always as precise as it needs to be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are good. The headteacher, after returning from an extended absence, is again providing a clear lead to the work of the school. She has a strong sense of purpose and has developed an effective staff team that is supported well by an influential and supportive governing body. She works hard to encourage parents and pupils to contribute their views and to provide a consistent focus on improvement. Governors work in a successful partnership with the head and her staff. They have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs to improve. They were particularly supportive and helpful during the time of the headteacher's absence. Accurate procedures have been developed to check on how well pupils are achieving and the school ensures that staff with subject responsibilities have time and opportunities to evaluate standards of teaching and learning in their subjects. Although many of these systems are quite recent, there are signs that they are leading to improvement, for example, in the quality of teaching and learning, but the school recognises the need for them to become established consistently. A more stable staff team, supported well by governors and parents, is moving the school forward and it is set up well for its further development.

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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?	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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.

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	2
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	3
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	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

26 January 2007

Dear Children

Flamstead Village School, Trowley Hill Road, Flamstead, St. Albans, Herts, AL3 8DL

Thank you for being so friendly and making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. You and your parents think that it is a good school and I agree. What I liked most about your school was:

- Your teachers and other adults care about you as individuals, make sure that you are safe and listen to your opinions about school.
- You get on very well together and are kind to each other. I particularly like the way that older pupils look after the younger ones.
- You behave exceptionally well and clearly enjoy school; this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn.
- Teachers make your lessons interesting and all the adults put a lot of effort into helping you do well. You enjoy your work and try hard to do what your teachers ask.
- The school puts on a good range of activities, clubs and trips out of school. I know you enjoy these very much.
- Mrs Thornton, the staff and governors are working hard to make your school even better.

I think your school could be even better if your teachers develop better ways of deciding what you have understood and what you still find difficult. They can then guide you on the next steps to take to improve your work, especially your writing. I have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities in lessons to challenge those of you who are particularly good at your work. I also asked your school to provide more opportunities for teachers who are responsible for particular subjects to look carefully at the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and see where they can help you to achieve even better. It is pleasing to note that work on this has already started.

I hope that you continue to be happy at school and carry on working hard.

Colin Henderson

Lead Inspector