

Upton Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134653
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	316270
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Spearman
Headteacher	Helen Hollwey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Square Upton Northampton NN5 4EZ
Telephone number	01604 683850
Fax number	01604 683855

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Upton Meadows is a small primary school that opened in September 2006 to accommodate children from a new housing development where it is situated. However, because of building delays, it occupied temporary accommodation at a nearby school until April 2007. The number on roll has risen rapidly from 40 on opening, and it is expected to accommodate some 400 pupils when the second phase of the school building is completed. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that seen nationally, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at their new school, as confirmed by one pupil who stated, 'School is great. Everyone is friendly and lessons are fun. We've got a great playground and field.'

The school's success in enabling pupils to settle well in their new environment is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher together with the willing and effective support of all staff. The successful personal development of pupils is a reflection of the good pastoral care provided by staff. The headteacher has the full support of parents, pupils and the local community. This is helping to ensure, as the school population grows on a weekly basis, that the good curriculum is adapted to match the changing and different needs of the pupils. In particular, the wide range of clubs, visits and visitors helps to make the pupils' experiences varied and stimulating. This is obvious in the pupils' willingness to speak about their school and their absolute delight in all that they do. Pupils are very pleased with the opportunity to make use of the excellent computer and technology facilities, and teachers know how to make effective use of the resources to add that 'bit extra' to lessons.

Children enter the Reception class with skill levels that are below those expected for their age. They are making good progress and are on course to reach average standards by the time they start Year 1. In the later years, standards are broadly average in the key areas of English, mathematics and science, and above average in information and communication technology (ICT). Considering that most pupils have been at the school for less than two terms, this represents good progress and shows they are achieving well. However, the school rightly recognises that it does not yet provide a wide enough range of writing opportunities in all subjects to overcome the relative weakness in writing. Pupils are well looked after and there is good provision and support to ensure those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers.

The good teaching is the result of effective support provided by senior staff which enables new teachers to settle well. Throughout the school, the excellent relationships between staff and pupils help to create a wonderfully calm learning environment where pupils behave well and want to do their best. The teachers' marking of work is generally good, although it is not always well matched to the pupils' individual targets. The lack of reliable data concerning recently arrived pupils has resulted in the school urgently needing to amass its own information. This it has done, enabling teachers to match work effectively to the pupils' abilities and to provide additional support where needed.

The school's rapid growth has meant that the headteacher has yet to devolve responsibility to the newly appointed middle managers. As a result, they are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of the school's work. The governors take their responsibilities seriously and are taking advantage of the local authority's training programme to help them understand how they can hold the school to account more effectively. The speed with which the leadership of the school has established a good learning environment and adapted to the rapidly increasing population shows that it is well prepared for the future and has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are provided with a rich variety of experiences in the Reception class. They are looked after well and quickly settle to school, thoroughly enjoying the activities. Good emphasis is placed on developing the children's basic skills but there are also plenty of opportunities to widen their experiences through physical and creative activities. The children's personal development is promoted well, with a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those chosen by the children. Already, they show considerable confidence in using computers and the interactive whiteboard. Support staff make a good contribution to learning and help to promote the positive relationships. Very good links have been established with the recently formed pre-school group who occupy a room adjacent to the Reception class. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and have helped to ensure the temporary teacher is provided with good guidance and support. Whilst there is an excellent outside area, it is not always used to best advantage, particularly during inclement weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing pupils with more opportunities to practise and extend their writing across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of marking by ensuring it is consistently developmental and better matched to the pupils' individual learning targets.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of middle managers to ensure they are more effectively involved in monitoring the quality of the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children are given a good start in the Reception class and make good progress. The 2007 national assessments at Year 2 showed pupils attained standards that were below average. However, the good achievement of pupils means that standards are now much closer to the national average. Standards in writing are starting to improve as pupils are given more opportunity to practise their skills in other subjects. However, the school acknowledges that these opportunities are not yet sufficient to accelerate the pupils' writing skills.

Pupils achieve well throughout Key Stage 2 and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. A well-structured programme helps pupils to develop good reading skills. As in Key Stage 1, pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing skills across the curriculum. The good range of science work enables the pupils to attain average standards. The pupils' ICT skills are good, the result of very good resources and well-planned activities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at the same rate as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' behaviour is consistently good and they treat one another with respect. They respond very well to instructions and take seriously the opportunities they have to take on posts of responsibility. For example, they are proud of their role in helping with the induction of pupils new to the school and of their positions as members of the school council and Eco group. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that the school offers, as shown in their good attendance and punctuality, and they contribute fully to lessons. They feel safe and well cared for and try to put into practice

their good understanding of the need to eat healthily and take exercise. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop socially and morally through their charitable work. The pupils' contribution to the community is not yet well established. However, the good use made by the school to celebrate the backgrounds of pupils enables all to understand the cultural diversity of their community. The pupils' improving basic skills, good ICT skills and ability to work well with one another prepare them well for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The confident and skilled teaching enables children in the Reception class to make good progress in all areas of learning. Lessons for these children are stimulating and taught with enthusiasm. The excellent technology facilities are used very well in all classes to add interest to lessons. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that their planning is adapted well to cater for the full range of abilities and ages. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they will achieve and, as a result, pupils behave and achieve well. Good use is made of class and group targets to pitch work at the right level. However, teachers' use of individual targets is less consistent and this results in some pupils not knowing what they need to do to make better progress. Whilst there are examples of very good marking, it does not always help the pupils to improve their work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide a good range of activities that stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class are provided with a wide range of interesting activities in all areas of learning, although the school is not yet making full use of the outdoor facilities to extend classroom learning for these children. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are provided with a good and varied curriculum. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sporting, musical and artistic events, enriches the curriculum. A well-planned personal, social and health education programme provides pupils with a good understanding of the dangers of drugs, alcohol and smoking and the need to follow a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well and child protection procedures are robust. Parents are delighted at the way their children have settled in the new school and are rightly confident that any concerns they have will be taken seriously. Pupils are happy and feel safe and are at ease in approaching staff should they have a problem. The school has rapidly gathered a good amount of information confirming the pupils' ability. This has enabled staff to allocate additional support where necessary, and is helping those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well. Academic guidance is generally good and pupils are challenged to do well. However, although there are examples of individual targets being used to set goals for pupils to achieve higher standards, the process is not yet embedded in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The appointment of new staff to take account of the continued growth of the school has been managed extremely well by the headteacher. Through necessity, she has taken the lead in many key areas. The recent appointment of experienced staff now provides the opportunity to delegate some of these responsibilities.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and senior staff have identified appropriate areas for development. These have quickly led to improvements in teaching, although school leaders acknowledge that teachers' marking of work and the use of pupils' individual targets are still inconsistent. Tracking procedures are detailed and used effectively, enabling the school to set challenging targets. The governors are supportive of the school, helping to ensure that finances and resources are directed to areas of greatest need. However, they are still developing their skills in monitoring the school's effectiveness. The views of parents and pupils are sampled and these are taken into account when identifying areas for future development. Good and developing links with outside agencies are helping to improve the school's provision. The school's evaluation of its work is good, and demonstrates a clear understanding of how to move forward and raise standards further.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

15 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upton Meadows Primary School, Northampton, NN5 4EZ

Thank you all very much for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. It is a good school, and you make good progress because of the good teaching. Standards are average in most subjects, but whilst you do particularly well in ICT, your writing is not yet quite as good as it could be.

These are some of the things we liked best.

- Children in the Reception class are given a good start to school.
- You behave well and thoroughly enjoy lessons and other activities.
- There are lots of interesting lessons and other activities to help you learn.
- You know about keeping healthy and try to take plenty of exercise and eat the right foods.
- Staff look after you well and give you good support.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make lessons and work better for you.

This is what the school needs to do to make it better.

- Help you to make even better progress in writing by ensuring you get lots of practice to write in different subjects.
- Make sure that when your work is marked, it tells you how to get better and is linked to your individual targets.
- Improve how those in charge of the school check how well it is doing.

You can do your bit by working really hard to improve your writing. You are right to be pleased with your wonderful new building and I am pleased that you enjoy being there. I wish you all the best for the future.

Paul Edwards Lead inspector