

Eversholt Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109449
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	324962
Inspection date	26 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	75
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Warren
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church End Eversholt Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire MK17 9DU
Telephone number	01525 280298
Fax number	01525 280298

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); how the school is raising writing standards further, especially for boys; and how effectively subject leaders contribute to the school's development.

The inspectors gathered evidence from records of pupils' progress, observations of lessons and breaktime activities, examples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and questionnaires and letters from parents. The main documents used by the school in its monitoring were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Pupils attend this small school from Eversholt and quite a wide surrounding area. Most come from advantaged backgrounds, virtually all are from White British families and all speak English as their first language. Numbers of pupils having free school meals are extremely low. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average, although no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Most of the pupils receiving additional help with learning have mild learning difficulties or need support with behaviour. Children join the EYFS in the term following their fourth birthday. Their attainment on entry varies but typically is a little above the levels expected nationally for this age group.

The school holds a Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school has continued to build well on the many strengths that were identified when it was last inspected. Most significantly, pupils have maintained very high standards in their personal development and have achieved great consistency in the high standards they reach academically. The school works in an extremely close and productive partnership with parents and their views of the provision are overwhelmingly positive. They are typified by the parents who commented, 'Both of our children thoroughly enjoy school and we are thrilled with their progress'.

Pupils' academic achievements are first rate. Very high standards in key basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, equip them well to cope with the full breadth of the curriculum and ensure they are extremely well prepared for their next school. Each year since the previous inspection in 2005, pupils' results in the assessments of reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 have been exceptionally high. Pupils generally move to middle school with standards that are at least a year ahead of those expected for their age. Last year, their reading standards were two years ahead. In spite of reaching such high standards, staff are determined that pupils will do still more. Teachers' monitoring of performance shows that very high standards continue to be achieved in writing. However, in line with the national picture, girls do better than boys. A current initiative is focusing on providing writing activities that suit the interests and needs of both boys and girls more closely. An increase in practical and imaginative elements of lessons is engaging the interest of all pupils, as seen in a Key Stage 2 lesson that used drama and music to aid pupils' planning of a story set in a cold, strange land. At the same time, to fire their imagination, Key Stage 1 pupils received a visit from a knight in full costume as part of their study of castles. While it is too early to assess the impact of such activities on standards, indications are that they are having a positive effect on boys' motivation.

Staff offer high quality pastoral care and ensure that the necessary arrangements to safeguard pupils are in place. In all age groups, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are confident and articulate young people who are proud of their school. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a very strong appreciation of what is needed to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. They enjoy their education enormously and take full advantage of the many social opportunities offered through lessons, clubs and visits, including residential stays in France. Attendance levels are high and this supports pupils' rapid progress. Behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes is extremely good.

Pupils value the relationships they make with each other and with adults in school; they show caring attitudes. They feel that adults listen to their views, citing as an example their involvement in the recent refurbishment of toilets. Pupils are enabled to contribute extremely well to the smooth running of their own community through the house system. They take leadership roles as house captains and school councillors and learn about democracy in action.

Pupils have a good understanding of traditional British culture, aided by features such as the provision for history and the arts. Staff regularly encourage pupils' understanding of modern cultural diversity, for example, through visits to contrasting locations, extensive charity work and topics that cover geography and religious education. While the school plays a full part in promoting extremely good cohesion in its local community, its strategy for encouraging pupils' understanding of wider cultural diversity is not stated clearly. As a result, staff and governors are not sufficiently aware of how well pupils learn about this aspect of the curriculum or how provision could be improved.

Pupils learn very efficiently because of high quality teaching and a strong curriculum. Significant recent improvements include the increased use of tracking systems to check individual progress, rigorous target-setting and, where necessary, speedy adult intervention to boost progress. These systems ensure that pupils match up to or exceed teachers' high expectations of how well they can achieve. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together, particularly to address the needs of the wide range of ages in each class. Provision for pupils who need extra help and for those who can benefit from additional challenge is very effective. A parent testified to this saying, 'The school has been fantastic at picking up on areas that my son needs to improve upon and helping him with those.' Because they are fully involved in setting and reviewing their own learning targets, pupils are clear about what they have learned and about the next steps they should take. The current focus on implementing a more 'creative' curriculum is based securely on the skills that pupils need, combined with cross-curricular links between subjects. Pupils and their parents are positive about the improvements so far which have made learning more interesting and relevant.

Consistently high performance by pupils and the school's great popularity with parents are testimony to the outstanding leadership and management. The school has reaped the benefits of having a stable staff and highly effective governors. The headteacher leads by example with rigorous analysis and evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Subject leaders work as a coherent team and responsibilities are both delegated and shared well. Class teachers all carry several subject responsibilities and are trained well to check the quality of provision and pupils' achievement. Governors offer a wide range of valuable skills and hold the school to account. Initiatives for further improvement are monitored very well to check that they have the desired outcomes for the pupils. For example, there are clear strategies to check that each of the current changes to the curriculum benefits the pupils. The school's very successful track record under its current team of staff and governors places it in a strong position to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children have an outstanding start in the EYFS class. The school's records of recent years show that children make extremely good progress in all areas of learning. By the time they start Year 1, standards are much higher than those seen in most schools. Children's personal development is excellent. The newest intake has settled quickly into school and parents' views are very positive. One parent wrote of the 'wonderful environment for the introduction to full-time schooling'. The staff team is highly effective in promoting children's welfare. The result is that children have a safe environment, behave exceptionally well and can be confident that any upsets or problems will be dealt with promptly and sensitively. Staff work well together to provide an exciting range of activities for this age group. During the inspection they had great fun playing roles as animal characters acting a story for the Chinese New Year. Very good use is made of the accommodation with children moving smoothly between indoors and out. There is close attention to individual interests and needs. Children have many opportunities to choose or plan activities, while staff ensure that key skills are developed in adult-led sessions also. The class is organised so that newer entrants attend initially for afternoon sessions only. This gives them a relaxed and comfortable start to their time in school and they mix well with their older classmates. This arrangement also enables staff to ensure that older children receive extra time and attention during morning sessions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify the school's strategy for promoting community cohesion and how this will be evaluated.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eversholt Lower School, Eversholt, Milton Keynes MK17 9DU

I am writing to thank you all for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. You really helped us to get to know your school. Particular thanks go to the group from Sun Class who gave up time to talk to Mr Sangster.

I am delighted to write to tell you that we think your school is outstanding. Many of you and your parents told us how much you enjoy your education and we could see why. The teaching in your school is high quality so that you make excellent progress and reach high standards in your work. This means that, when Year 4 pupils leave, they are exceptionally well prepared for their work at their next schools. The adults are working hard to make sure that you all enjoy your lessons even more by linking subjects together and providing lots of practical and imaginative activities. We think that this is going well and you told us that you have lots of fun and excitement, both in school and in all the clubs and visits on offer.

You are caring young people who respect others and behave extremely well. You and your parents also told us that the adults in your school care for you in an outstanding way, and we agree. We also heard about the many ways your teachers listen to your views and help you to contribute to plans for the school. We know you value this.

All these splendid things happen because the staff and governors in your school work together as an excellent team. They are very ambitious about how well you can do and you rise to the challenges they set.

We have asked the staff and governors to look at how they can improve one important part of how the school works. We think the adults need to be clearer about their future plans for teaching you about the lives of people from other backgrounds and other parts of the world. In this way they will help you to learn even more about life outside your own part of Bedfordshire.

I send my best wishes for the future and hope you keep on enjoying life at Eversholt School.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ranger

Lead inspector