

Maulden Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109472
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337297
Inspection dates	16-17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Caroline Gilby
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Gerig
Date of previous school inspection	12-13 June 2007
School address	Church Road Maulden Bedford MK45 2AY
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Age group	4 - 9Error! Reference source not found.
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation and undertook an analysis of parents', pupils' and teachers' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Pupils' progress in mathematics from Year 2 to Year 4 as identified in the last inspection report.
- Whether the teachers set precise targets for pupils so that pupils know and understand these, and whether teachers take these targets into account when planning their lessons.
- The contribution of the subject coordinators in effectively monitoring the quality of teaching and accurately tracking pupils' progress in their areas of responsibilities.
- The responsiveness of curriculum design, planning and implementation to match pupils' needs and interests.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school, catering mainly for pupils from the local village. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The socio-economic circumstances of most families are above the average. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils aged four and five, who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are educated in the Reception class. Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are above expected levels, especially in their literacy skills.

The school has a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Eco Friendly and international awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Maulden Lower is a satisfactory school. It has several good and outstanding features, including pupils' exemplary behaviour, excellent attitudes to work and their very good attendance. Staff know the pupils' pastoral needs very well and they provide good support where needed. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in their learning and development. Throughout Key Stage 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory and pupils attain standards that are above the national average by the end of Year 4, particularly in literacy. Standards in numeracy and science are rising at a slower pace. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the targeted support they receive. However, pupils, particularly those of middle ability, do not always make as much progress as they could because of a lack of challenge in some lessons. This is because work is not always appropriate for their abilities and pupils are not provided with sufficiently clear guidance to help them to improve. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but most is satisfactory.

The school has established positive relationships with parents through formal and informal meetings, as well as consulting parents through regular questionnaires. Where parents raise concerns, the school's leaders act swiftly to take effective action.

The senior leadership team has set a clear agenda for school improvement. Pupils' work in reading and writing has improved consistently over the last five years. Standards in mathematics are beginning to improve. The school recognises that there is still much to do to further improve standards in mathematics and in science. They recognise that this can only happen if the subject coordinators are effective in leading and managing their subjects and holding staff to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress made by pupils throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics and science by providing pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Raise levels of achievement by ensuring that coordinators are more effective in leading and managing their subjects and holding staff to account.
- Ensure activities are precisely matched to the learning needs of individual pupils particularly those of middle ability.

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About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

While teachers provide varied and interesting activities which pupils enjoy, these are not sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make better than satisfactory progress by the time they leave school. Progress made by pupils is variable between subjects. For example, pupils make very good progress in reading and writing, while their progress in mathematics and science is satisfactory. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with standards that are above those expected for their age.

The school has focused successfully on raising the attainment of those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils make good progress. The senior leadership team has responded well to gathering robust assessment data for individual and groups of pupils. However, this is not consistently used by the subject coordinators and teachers to inform their planning or to set precise targets that pupils understand.

The 2009 unvalidated national test results by the end of Year 2 indicate that standards are above those expected nationally with some variations between subjects. For example, reading is well above expected levels and writing and mathematics just above national expectations. By the end of Year 4, standards in reading are well above those expected nationally, slightly above in writing and mathematics.

Relationships are good between adults and pupils and a particular feature of this rapport is the mutual respect witnessed between pupils and staff. Staff genuinely care about their pupils. Consequently, pupils feel very safe in school and free from bullying and harassment of any sort. Pupils said that they know who to go to if they need any help. As one pupil commented 'I love this school and my teacher because she is helpful and caring to everybody'. Pupils have an excellent understanding about healthy eating and how to keep fit. School meals and snacks encourage pupils to eat healthily and the wide range of physical activities during and after school are popular with pupils. Pupils are proud of the range of facilities they have and use, as one pupil put it, 'my school has a swimming pool, top field and playground'. Pupils readily take on responsibilities and are eager to be involved in decision-making. Pupils in the school council play an active role in the life of the school and enjoy assisting pupils make new friends when they watch out for anyone who is sitting on the 'buddy bench'. Attendance and punctuality are excellent and the school works effectively with parents, carers and other appropriate agencies to improve the attendance of a very small group of pupils. Pupils show a great deal of interest in the world around them, their place within it and their relationships with others. They work well

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together to make the school a place where they are happy. As one pupils put it, 'I like my school because the topics are great' and another, 'all the people are very loving and kind and helpful'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The majority of the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory. Staff have high expectations of behaviour which encourages a strong work ethic. Pupils settle quickly, are eager to get on with their tasks, work with enthusiasm and enjoy their lessons. Teachers plan lessons well but some do not focus consistently on purposeful learning and appropriate outcomes. While teachers have a firm grasp of pupils' progress within published programmes of work they are less able to account for the progress made against national measures. All staff know the pupils well but because their expectations are not sufficiently ambitious. Some pupils do not always make the progress that they are capable of making. Teachers have no difficulty in engaging pupils in their learning because they are all exceptionally well behaved, have excellent attitudes and are enthusiastic about learning. Activities successfully consolidate new learning, although not enough require pupils to investigate, inquire, solve problems or work in teams. There is a tendency by some teachers to do much of the work for the pupils and dominate the lesson by spending too much time consolidating previous learning and giving lengthy introductions.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The school has recently undertaken a review of its curriculum provision which provides satisfactory preparation for the next stage of pupils' education. The school is aware that it is too early to evaluate its impact on learning. The curriculum is enriched by good partnerships with nearby schools. Opportunities are however, missed for applying skills learned in English and mathematics across the curriculum. The school has made good links with a school in The Gambia, about which the pupils speak with great enthusiasm because they 'like helping other children'. This link however, is not yet embedded in the wider curriculum. Similarly, the curriculum plan does not consistently respond to widening pupils' experience of different cultures and beliefs within Britain.

Curriculum planning is enhanced by linking subjects through themes. A walk around the school during the inspection revealed some of these themes being carried over into the playground. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 found a shield bug on the path and were keen to move it to safety. They shared with the inspector all that they had learned in the class about different types of bugs with great excitement.

The school provides a caring and welcoming learning environment for all pupils. There are good arrangements for transition between key stages, and particularly from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. A great strength of the school is the way in which those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to build self-esteem and to progress well. This is due to the school's keenness to work closely with parents, carers and outside agencies, and to provide sensitive and targeted support when it is needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has established an excellent working relationship with her deputy headteacher and there are clear plans in place to address identified areas of weakness. There is comprehensive tracking of pupils' progress but this data is not used effectively by all staff to inform their teaching to meet the individual needs of pupils. The accurate judgments of the headteacher during a series of joint lesson observations with the inspector, scrutiny of pupils' work and the senior leadership's

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engagement with the inspection team demonstrated that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Discussion with governors showed that they visit the school regularly and that the headteacher keeps them well informed of developments. They take the pupils welfare very seriously and, at the time of the inspection, all statutory safeguarding requirements were firmly in place. They are highly committed to the school and are very supportive. They challenge appropriately and acknowledge that they could play a greater role in holding the subject coordinators to account on their responsibility for pupils' progress. Governors manage the budget well and there are no major shortcomings in the management or use of resources.

The school takes full account of parents' views and has made good progress in improving communications and engaging parents in their children's learning. For example, significant numbers of parents attend meetings to help develop skills to support their children in reading. There is an established after-school club attended by significant numbers of pupils, of which parents are very appreciative.

The contribution to community cohesion is addressed well within, and immediately around, the school, especially through the links with local schools. However, their knowledge of communities outside Maulden is less well developed. The school has made a satisfactory start to promoting equalities and there have been no reported incidents of racial harassment or discrimination in the last five years. Pupils and the parent-teacher association raise considerable money to benefit the school and various charities. Pupils in the school council were excited about being able to help African children through their link school in The Gambia.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with many well developed skills however, by the end of Reception they make satisfactory progress because teachers do not always encourage and challenge the more able. They have settled quickly considering some only started school on the day of the inspection. Children are enthusiastic and engage readily in a good range of appropriate and interesting activities. Adults use assessment well and develop children’s learning through effective use of questioning. Resources are used effectively to support learning across all areas of the curriculum and children benefit from a stimulating environment, both inside and outdoors. Activities are carefully planned to include a wide range of stimuli, including examples of written language and numbers. However, at times these are not developed to challenge the children further. Children relate well to each other and to the adults that work with them. They play well, both independently and under the direction of adults, sustaining good levels of concentration. They are developing good independent skills. For example, they readily use resources and tidy away afterwards.

The rooms and outdoor facilities are well managed and the coordinator is well supported by an effective team. They have a good understanding of the educational and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that they are met. Safeguarding procedures are robust, ensuring that the children are safe. Careful management results in excellent behaviour and inquisitive children. Partnership arrangements with the local nurseries are used effectively to develop learning and build good links between home and school. As one parents said, ‘the transition from pre-school was in my opinion outstanding. The home visit is an excellent idea’.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Forty-three parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The views expressed of the school were very positive. Several parents wrote comments praising specific aspects of the school’s work, including the care and support offered to their children. All the parents identified that their children are happy at school, enjoy attending and that healthy lifestyles are promoted very well. All think the school is well led and managed. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the after school club. A few questionnaires raised concerns but these were related to individual matters rather than whole-school issues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maulden Lower School complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 138 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	74	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	76	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	16	35	25	54	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	37	25	54	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	57	16	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	57	18	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	54	18	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	61	17	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	23	50	19	41	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	48	19	41	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	41	19	41	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	22	48	21	46	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	67	12	26	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



18 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maulden Lower school, Maulden, Bedford MK45 2AU

Thank you for making us so welcome and for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. I particularly want to thank those pupils who are on the school council for giving up their lunch time to meet with us. They did you proud.

Maulden Lower is a satisfactory school with some good and outstanding features. Your attitudes and behaviour are exemplary and you work hard in lessons. However, many of you could learn even more and your teachers can help you with this. I have asked your headteacher to make sure that the teachers plan their lessons so that those of you who find learning quite easy and those who find some of the learning a little difficult are challenged better by the work you are given to do.

Your teachers have been working hard to change the way they teach you to read and write, and they have involved the help of your parents. This has made a big difference for most of you and your reading and writing skills are much better than other children nationally. This is not been the case in mathematics and science where some of you are not doing as well, so I have asked your teachers to help you all to do better in these subjects. I have also asked the subject coordinators to make sure that their subjects are taught by all the teachers to a high standard.

I think you get on really well with each other and many of you learn new skills by being on the school council or being buddies for other children.

I wish you all the very best and hope that you will help your teachers to make sure that your school continues to get even better.

Yours faithfully

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector

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