

Toddington St George Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109608
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310035
Inspection date	22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Williams
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Manor Road Toddington Bedfordshire LU5 6AJ
Telephone number	01525 872360
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Age group	3-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards at the end of Year 4; how effectively the curriculum meets the wide range of learning needs in the school and the quality of systems for academic guidance, including marking of work, setting targets and providing support. Teaching, learning, leadership, management, and pupils' personal development were also inspected. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report. Observations of lessons and pupils' work, discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils, the parental questionnaires and school self-evaluation documents provided inspection evidence.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average first school. It serves a community with favourable social circumstances and the proportion of pupils who take free school meals is below average. The attainment of children starting school is similar to that expected nationally for their age, but there is a general weakness in their communication skills. Most pupils come from a White British background although a range of other ethnic backgrounds and the traveller community are represented in the school. A very small proportion of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has provision to support pupils with hearing impairment. Currently eight pupils are supported full-time and three are supported part-time. Other needs mainly include autism and behavioural/emotional needs. Awards include the Active Mark and Healthy Schools Status, achieved in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

All pupils make exceptional progress in this outstanding school. Standards at the end of Year 4 are consistently extremely high in comparison to the level expected nationally for pupils of this age. The school's real strength lies in the fact that it meets a very wide range and variety of learning needs terrifically well. Parents feel strongly that this is the case. The following comments represent the views of a great number of them. 'All my children have been very happy at St George's. It is a friendly school, which cares for all children whatever their needs and helps them achieve their best, whatever their ability.'

Excellent progress begins as soon as children join the school. They perform tremendously well in the Nursery and Reception and by the time they move into Year 1, standards in all areas of learning exceed the goals expected nationally at the end of the Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is above average year on year. Not only are standards the end of Year 4 exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science, but displays of pupils' work, books and lesson observations show that standards in art, design and technology, history, geography and music are also high. They are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their education. High standards across the curriculum reflect the excellent quality of education provided by the school. The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers work very well in teams and ensure that pupils in different classes in each year group have similar learning experiences. They use the information they have about each pupil's progress superbly well to match work to their individual needs and to ensure that all pupils progress at a rapid pace in lessons. In the three Year 4 mathematics groups observed, work was very carefully planned and matched to pupils' capability.

The curriculum is excellent and is very carefully planned to meet the wide range of learning needs present. There are good links between subjects so pupils are able to see a purpose to learning. However, these links are not yet developed into different themes or topics that make learning even more stimulating. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' awareness of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They are fully aware of healthy eating and of sensible use of medicines and other potentially dangerous substances. The school provides excellent opportunities, both in planned timetables and in extra-curricular activities, to keep physically fit. It provides first-rate support for pupils who experience challenges in their learning. Those pupils with hearing impairment, with physical disabilities or with behavioural difficulties all receive excellent support through the curriculum and their progress against their own targets is excellent. Similarly, those identified as having special talents, receive equally good support and make exceptional progress. Central to the high quality support provided for all pupils is the skill of the support staff. Teaching assistants and teachers have specialist skills that enable them to provide the specific support required by some pupils to a high level of expertise.

The pastoral care shown for pupils in this school is outstanding. Because of this, pupils feel very safe. Those spoken to were all able to name a person they would ask for help if necessary. Behaviour is exceptional. Pupils enjoy school a lot and their attendance is above average. They enjoy the wide range of before and after school clubs, which are varied enough to meet the preferences of the large number of pupils who take part. They like the trips linked to their learning, which provide excitement and enjoyment. The school is highly inclusive and all pupils benefit from contact with others with a wide range of different needs, such as learning to 'sign'. This, and their high level of involvement in the local and overseas communities through charity work and sponsorship, adds to pupils' terrific spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal

development. The school maintains extremely strong links with the middle and high schools and the local community, which benefit pupils greatly.

The academic support that pupils receive is outstanding. A great deal of care goes into setting targets that are challenging for individuals and groups of pupils and support their marvellous progress in English and mathematics as well as aspects of their personal development. Pupils with specific learning plans have extra targets that are highly appropriate and meet their needs very well. Teachers review targets regularly and update them so progress is continuous. Pupils are fully aware of their targets and the progress that they are making towards meeting them. Clear statements of learning made at the beginning of lessons raise pupils' awareness of what they are intended to learn and help them to be successful in assessing their known progress at the end.

Leadership and management are outstanding, particularly that of the headteacher. Parents are very confident in her leadership. Since taking up the lead role in school she has established strong teamwork, set a clear agenda for continuous improvement and inspired all staff to work exceptionally effectively for the good of the pupils. Subject leaders have a significant role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the work in their subjects or areas of provision. Particularly strong support for school leadership and management comes from the Foundation Stage leader and the teachers in charge of special needs support and for those pupils with hearing difficulties. They are highly committed and their work is invaluable in maintaining the school's very strong ethos of equality and inclusion. Governance is excellent. The governors have a very strong input to the school and provide high levels of support and challenge to the headteacher and her team. The high quality of leadership and management, the depth of school's self-evaluation and the high quality of education provided means the school has an excellent capacity to continue the improvement seen since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and provides an excellent start to children's education. It is extremely well led and managed by the Foundation Stage leader, who leads a very successful team. Teaching and learning are particularly effective and as a result, children achieve very well, especially in developing their communication and language skills. Adults soon identify those children who find learning difficult and provide support at the earliest opportunity, giving them the best possible chance to progress. Teamwork between teachers and the highly skilled assistants is strong so the learning processes runs very smoothly, helping children become confident about classroom routines and develop into effective learners. Curriculum planning is particularly good in meeting children's needs because there is a very good balance of teacher-led learning and activities that children choose for themselves. The outdoor area provides an effective learning extension to the classrooms. Children are cared for well. Assessment procedures are thorough and support pupils' excellent progress so that most reach and many exceed the levels expected nationally by the time they start in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan the themed approach to learning in greater depth and detail by linking subjects in order to add even greater relevance and stimulus to learning.

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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
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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 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.

Annex A

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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Toddington St George Lower School, Toddington, LU5 6AJ

Thank you all for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed the time I spent meeting you and your teachers, visiting lessons to watch you learn, speaking to you to find out what you think about the school and how you help to make it a success. With your help, I managed to find out a lot. What I saw and heard impressed me.

You go to an excellent school. Mrs Spencer is an outstanding headteacher. She leads a strong team of adults very effectively to provide you with an outstanding education, including teaching, the curriculum and the quality of care. You all make excellent progress in lessons and reach exceptionally high standards in your work so that you are all very well prepared to go on to the next stages of your education. What is impressive about your school is the remarkable way adults care for each individual child. This also impresses your parents, who think very highly of the headteacher and staff.

You make a very important contribution by behaving excellently, taking responsibility very seriously and trying hard to do your best. I was very pleased by the sensible way in which you learn, make friends with others and care about each other. You help to make others feel safe in school and enjoy being there. Those of you I spoke to, enjoy school very much.

Mrs Spencer has done a lot to improve your school since she came, and continues to try to make it even better. I have asked staff and governors to look at planning the curriculum into topics and linking different subjects so that your learning becomes even more interesting and enjoyable.

I wish you all the best in the future.

David Speakman Lead inspector