

# Hockliffe Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109529
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337313
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Geof Timms

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Lower
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Valerie Stanbridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sara Walden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Woburn Road Hockliffe Leighton Buzzard LU7 9LL
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons and three teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work, school policies, minutes of governing body meetings and reports from the local authority. Twenty one questionnaires from parents and carers were returned and scrutinised, alongside those completed by staff and pupils.

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

- Standards in writing and mathematics.
- How the school supports the most able pupils.
- The impact of curriculum changes and the school's international work.
- The systems for monitoring the work of the school.

## Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average school. A broadly average proportion of the pupils is entitled to free school meals. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none currently speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very high in some year groups. The proportions of pupils that join or leave the school at times other than is normal is high.

The school works closely together with other schools in a local learning community. There is a playgroup and after-school club on the site but they are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately. The school has National Healthy School Status, Activemark, a Green Tree award for its work on recycling and an International School Award for its work with schools and communities in other countries.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This outstanding school has many important strengths. One of these is the willingness of all staff to look beyond the limitations imposed by the small size of the school to extend all pupils' horizons and to support their excellent progress. The school staff evaluate its successes well, although the monitoring work of the governing body is slightly less systematic. The school has an excellent ambition and purpose that is shared with all and is continually aimed at raising pupils' standards still further. This provides a clear and outstanding capacity to maintain strengths and improve further in the future. The school plans to develop subject leadership further, especially with the intention of raising standards. Even so, the staff support each other very well: a particular strength is the way they monitor and evaluate each others' work through a range of effective joint activities.

From their often low levels of attainment on entry to the school, pupils make excellent progress due to the outstanding teaching they receive. This is also helped by their very strong attitudes towards learning, and excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. This achievement is especially good, given the high proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the high numbers who join the school at times other than normal. Pupils achieve exceptionally high standards in reading and the school has worked hard recently to raise standards further in writing and mathematics. This has had some success, but too few pupils still reach the higher levels and teachers, even though their work has many outstanding features, occasionally miss opportunities in some lessons to provide pupils with sufficient challenge.

The school has a number of awards that reflect its work to promote pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the impact of food, drink and exercise on their bodies. All those spoken with say they feel safe at school and have adults they can place their trust in if worried or concerned. This is reflected in the positive responses to the school's work in the parents' and carers' questionnaires. When given opportunities to take responsibility, pupils respond very positively and make the most of the independence offered. This is seen especially in the gardening work which has a high profile in all three classes. The school council was delighted to receive a cheque during the inspection for their work recycling ink cartridges.

Teachers are very well supported by some excellent teaching assistants. Their work often has an outstanding impact on pupils' learning, especially for older pupils who

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find learning difficult or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The adult support enables them to access the full curriculum and this helps them make excellent progress from their starting points. The school has worked hard to develop a creative curriculum where good links are made between subjects, and the focus on creative activities is enhanced. Particularly strong is the school’s international work. Teachers have exchanged with staff from other countries and the links created have supported pupils’ very strong understanding of how others live. In particular, they can talk knowledgeably about children in Uganda, Senegal and Germany. This has had a very positive impact on pupils’ learning, especially in geography, and art and design. However, the governing body have not yet developed monitoring systems to assess accurately the impact of this work to promote community cohesion.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in order to:
  - raise standards in writing and mathematics further
  - ensure sufficient challenge for the most able pupils in all activities.
  
- Develop the governing body’s role in evaluating the impact of the school’s work to promote community cohesion.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

<b>1</b>
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Although standards rise and fall over time due to the very small numbers of pupils in each year group, the overall picture is one of consistently above average attainment. Observations of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils’ books clearly show outstanding progress as they move through the school. Pupils show real enjoyment in a lot of their activities: as one girl said, ‘I am a big fan of reading.’ Reading is a major strength and pupils reach exceptionally high standards. Teachers have worked hard to raise attainment in writing and this is evident in some very high quality writing in Years 3 and 4 as part of the topic on World War Two. Pupils wrote with real empathy as evacuees, giving clear and precise instructions about what families should do in an air raid. In mathematics, attainment has also risen since the last inspection. Although most pupils make excellent progress, not enough reach the higher levels especially in writing and mathematics. Attainment is high in other subjects such as geography, history, and art and design.

Attainment in the basic skills, including information and communication technology, is rising and resources for computer use have improved. This helps the staff prepare pupils well for their future education and life after school. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

A major strength evident in the teaching is the team work between staff. This is a very positive aspect and is successful in spreading good practice and developing the small team's skills in a range of ways. Relationships are very strong and pupils learn well because they are attentive and interested in the activities provided for them. The marking of pupils' work, and the use of assessment in ensuring all work is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, especially the most able, is not always sharp enough.

The creative curriculum, and especially the international work, is used very effectively to widen pupils' understanding and learning in a range of subjects. Practical activities are especially strong. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have created a large 'Dig for Victory' garden as part of their work on the Second World War. They are successfully growing and looking after a wide range of vegetables and fruits, and talk knowledgeably about these and about life during the war. In Years 1 and 2, pupils also look after a garden area and this helps them appreciate the wonder of growing things and of how they can work together to achieve success.

This is a very caring school and staff know the pupils and their families well. The support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. Gifted and talented pupils are also encouraged to make good use of their skills. This happened, for example, when one gifted dancer and gymnast helped coach a school team.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is very effectively led and managed by the headteacher and this has resulted in clear improvements since the last inspection. The monitoring of the success of the school is very much a team effort. Teachers share each others' work and professional development is used effectively to extend their skills. This has happened in mathematics teaching recently and with a very positive impact. New ideas are very willingly taken on board and the school has created an innovative curriculum, partly based around its international work. This has led to some very strong work on promoting community cohesion, especially through an understanding and realistic view of how people in other countries live. However, the governing body has not yet evaluated this work in sufficient depth and the pupils' understanding of how others in this country live is shallower. Nevertheless, leaders ensure that all groups are fully included and valued, and any discrimination is tackled ruthlessly.

The school has some excellent partnerships with other schools and outside agencies, such as the British Council. These have a positive impact on pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for through contact with a local specialist service, and there are some very strong links with other schools in the locality. The requirements for safeguarding pupils are met well.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>
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## Early Years Foundation Stage

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has worked hard this year to introduce new changes to the curriculum and to develop a positive play-based learning ethos. This has been done successfully. The Reception class contains a mix of children, some of whom attend full time and some part time. The learning environment is interesting and bright, and encourages children to explore and learn through practical activities. In one session, children excitedly observed tadpoles as their legs are developing. They drew and wrote about them and could discuss the process knowledgeably. They demonstrated real awe and wonder at this natural event, as they did at the speedy growth of the ducklings they helped to hatch.

The teaching is excellent and clearly results in some outstanding progress. The staff are particularly effective at creating a calm and relaxed ethos where children feel safe and secure in exploring their world. The individual learning plans make very effective use of information from parents about their children. They also use children’s interests to support the learning, as well as targeting areas recognised from the continual process of observing and assessing progress.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents’ and carers’ views are largely positive and a very large majority are pleased with their child’s experience at the school. All of those who replied agree that the school keeps their child safe. A small number felt that pupils’ poorer behaviour is not always dealt with well but no evidence to support this was found during the inspection: pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school was excellent. A high proportion of the responses show that parents and carers, although happy, are not as strongly pleased with the school as might be expected. This is because the school has not always promoted the success of its work sufficiently well.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

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

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 59 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	62	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	57	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	5	24	16	76	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	24	14	67	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	57	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	10	48	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	52	8	38	1	5	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)	8	38	9	43	2	10	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	6	29	14	67	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	10	16	76	3	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	10	15	71	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	29	11	52	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	13	62	7	33	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Hockliffe Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9LL**

I am writing to thank you for the friendly way you welcomed the inspectors to your school when we visited recently. I really enjoyed seeing you at work and play, and talking to many of you. It was very interesting hearing your views about how good the school is and it is clear that you really enjoy your time there.

I think yours is an outstanding school in many ways. There is some excellent teaching, as you told me yourselves, and this helps you make some outstanding progress. Because of this you reach high standards, especially in reading. You show an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy and safe, and you make a positive contribution to the school and the village. I was especially impressed with how well the older pupils are learning about the Second World War and how all of you know so much about how others live, especially in parts of Africa. It was really good to see how well all of you get on together and behave so well.

I have asked the school to do two things to help it improve even further. They need to help more of you reach the highest levels by making sure the work is hard enough for you and this will help raise standards. I have also asked the governing body to spend more time looking at how well you learn about how others live, especially in this country.

Thanks you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Hockliffe and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms  
Lead inspector

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