



Cauldwell Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130326
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 293627
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	First	School address	Edward Road
School category	Community		Bedford
Age range of pupils	5–9		Bedfordshire MK42 9DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 301400
Number on roll (school)	173	Fax number	01234 301401
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Leslie Bush
		Headteacher	Mrs Judith Apps
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Indian and Bangladeshi. A large majority are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Twenty two different languages are spoken at home. A few pupils come from refugee families. The attainment of most, but not all, children on starting school is well below average. Children are already five years old when they start school and some have attended the local authority nurseries on the site. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is high. The school is part of the Bedford Excellence Cluster and has achieved a number of awards, including Basic Skills and Investor in People status. It provides before and after school care and classes for parents.

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's mission statement is 'Committed to learning and achievement for all' and this sums it up admirably. It is an outstanding school where every child really does matter. Parents are extremely positive and one wrote, 'I feel that the diversity at Cauldwell and its inclusive ethos are very good role models.' The pupils endorse this, saying, 'It's a very happy school.'

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They become confident to take on a wide range of responsibilities because they receive such excellent support, care and guidance. Their social and emotional needs are taken very seriously and this helps them to do so well. Their behaviour is good and they are polite and friendly to visitors. The outstanding emphasis on keeping healthy means that pupils know what makes a balanced diet.

Pupils enjoy the exceptional curriculum with its broad range of visits, visitors and out of school activities. The school takes care to provide experiences that many of the pupils lack, such as swimming and theatre visits. There is excellent provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with specific talents and the large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. This has a significant effect on their excellent achievement.

Pupils are set challenging targets and make outstanding progress. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. They start school when they are already five years old, many with very low skills. Few reach the expected standard by the beginning of Year 1 because they have so much ground to make up. Standards are steadily rising and by the end of Year 2, they are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. A programme to teach pupils to identify and blend sounds, introduced two years ago in Reception, has had a positive impact on standards in Year 2. For example in 2006, all Bangladeshi pupils reached the expected level for their age.

Pupils continue to make excellent progress as they move through the school. Typically, well over a quarter of the pupils in Year 4 join the school after Year 2, often speaking no English. However, by the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 4, standards are near what is expected for their age in English and mathematics. Although improving each year, the number of pupils exceeding the expected level is small because many do not have sufficient vocabulary to enable them to do so. They do so well because teaching and learning are excellent and activities are very closely matched to their needs. For example, pupils are taught English and mathematics in sets according to their ability. Teachers have a thorough understanding of how to teach pupils with little English or have suffered trauma. Progress is very closely monitored and if a pupil appears to be lagging behind then programmes are put in place to help them do as well as possible.

The school's success is due to outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher and her deputy lead the school with enthusiasm and a commitment to the highest possible standards. They have a very accurate view of the school and continually search for ways to further improve it. They are very effectively supported

by the governors and staff. There is a tangible sense of team work where all are working for the benefit of the pupils. Every effort is made to encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning; for example, through the Cauldwell Community Project, but some do not help their children at home and this has a negative impact on standards. The quest for further improvement and the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection show that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve even further. It provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by developing pupils' language skills.
- Engage parents even more in their children's learning by helping them to understand how to help them at home.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make good progress in the Reception class because they are taught well. There is a very strong emphasis on developing language and social skills as these are so poorly developed when they start school. However, children do not reach the expected standards by the beginning of Year 1. The summer born children start school at the beginning of Year 1 but they are offered a Reception class curriculum for a term to give them a good start and help them catch up.

Pupils' achievement is excellent through Years 1 to 4. This is reflected in the Year 2 assessments for 2006 where standards had risen to broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics from significantly below average when they entered the school. Assessments for the end of Year 4 in the same year show that standards were broadly average in English and mathematics. Similar standards were also seen in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils behave well and thoroughly enjoy school. Attendance is broadly average and the school is continuing to work with parents to try to improve this. Many enriching opportunities, such as the residential visit, mean that pupils steadily grow in confidence. The excellent opportunities for sport after school and in physical education lessons and classroom aerobics help to keep them healthy. School meals are of good quality and complement well the healthy approach encouraged in numerous ways. Pupils contribute well to the community by acting as monitors at lunchtime and by fund raising. Pupils asked to go to the theatre and successfully raised the money. They develop an excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the caring ethos and the exceptional opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures represented in the school. The improvement they make in their basic skills equips them exceptionally well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have an excellent understanding of how pupils learn and plan activities that keep them interested. They have very high expectations and pupils strive to meet them. They give praise readily to boost pupils' self esteem and break lessons down into small steps to keep their attention and to help those who speak little English. Excellent relationships and use of humour make learning fun. Computers are used very effectively to promote learning and develop language. Very effective opportunities to share ideas with a partner give confidence whilst developing their language skills. Excellent assessment means that pupils are given work that is very well matched to their needs. Individual language plans help those who are learning English to succeed. Each pupil's progress is closely tracked and targets are set to help them succeed. This contributes very strongly to their excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A wide range of visits, visitors and out of school activities make learning interesting and broaden pupils' experiences. Basic skills are developed well in other subjects. For example, guided reading sessions in history and geography successfully help pupils catch up lost ground. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social, and health education, helping to overcome the challenging circumstances some face. Provision for the many early learners of English, those with learning difficulties and gifted and talented pupils is excellent. Last year, for example, some pupils reached the expected level for Year 6 when they were in Year 4. Topics often reflect pupils' particular interests. Subjects are taught in sizeable chunks, because these pupils achieve better when they can work at the same subject in some depth. Curriculum days involving the arts or the environment, for example, the successful 'Grounds day,' add yet more variety.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent pastoral systems and strong academic guidance enable pupils to achieve their full potential. There are many established support procedures, very good links with a range of external agencies and an impressive whole- staff commitment to caring for each child. One pupil expressed it as, 'Teachers like knowing how you feel so they can do something about it.' All necessary safeguarding procedures are in place. Pupils know their individual targets and very few lessons go by without teachers reminding individuals of their personal targets, such as 'not calling out.' The aim to realise class and individual targets in literacy and numeracy is continual, and all targets are carefully monitored with successes celebrated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Everything the headteacher and her deputy does is for the benefit of the pupils. The headteacher encourages the well being of her staff and, as a result, they say, 'We can go above and beyond!' because she builds their confidence. This in turn motivates the pupils. The headteacher identifies skills and talents from members of the community and uses them to great effect. For example, several support staff have trained to be teachers in the school. Some governors have also been recruited in this way. There is a very strong sense of team spirit amongst teachers, support staff and governors. All fulfil their management roles very effectively. The headteacher knows that parents can help to raise standards and has introduced many initiatives to involve them in their children's learning. However, there remain a large number of parents who are difficult to reach.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

11 January 2007

Dear Children,

Cauldwell Lower School, Edward Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 9DR

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we liked best.

You told us that you go to a friendly school and we agree with you. We thought your behaviour was good and that you are polite. You have lots of interesting things to do in lessons and it was good to see you enjoying using the computers so much. You have the chance to take part in lots of activities and we enjoyed hearing you sing and play Indian instruments in assembly. All the grown ups look after you extremely well and help you to learn. If you find learning hard or are just beginning to speak English you get lots of help. Your families know that you go to an excellent school.

We have asked your teachers to help you to do even better by helping you to learn new words that you can use in your writing and mathematics. You can help by continuing to try as hard as you can. We have also asked your teachers to show your parents how to help you at home. You can help by showing them your homework and telling them what you have to do before you bring it back to school.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at Cauldwell Lower School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead Inspector