

Camestone Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109462
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	337293
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Mantle
Headteacher	Paul Stanyard
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons involving 11 teachers and nine teaching assistants. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, self-evaluation form and local authority reports. They also analysed 115 parent questionnaires, 109 pupil and 21 staff questionnaires.

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

- teachers' expectations and their impact, particularly on girls' progress in mathematics
- how the school's tracking procedures are used to identify and improve the progress of any boy or girl who falls behind in their work
- how the school's ethos encourages pupils' personal development, well-being and their enjoyment of learning
- how the school's leaders and managers focus on improvement.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average for a school of this type. Pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. An average proportion speaks English as a second language, and a small number are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the International School Award. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The many positive comments given by pupils and parents, for example, 'A good school that does its best for pupils and their parents!' show how highly this school is valued. They reflect accurately that it is indeed a good school. It has some outstanding features. Several parents spoken to during the inspection had chosen to send their children here because 'they benefit hugely from the caring, supportive environment'. Pupils achieve well because they feel exceptionally safe and very happy, enjoy their learning and benefit from good teaching and a good range of interesting learning activities. The energetic and ambitious leadership of the headteacher provides a strong focus on improving the school. Governors and key staff, many of whom are new to their roles, contribute well to a cohesive team. They are becoming more rigorous in checking how well the school is doing, although their involvement in evaluating and rigorously driving forward improvement is not developed fully.

The school has a strong sense of community and behaviour is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are excellent throughout the school. Teachers work in a very successful partnership with teaching assistants to provide outstanding care, guidance and support that meet the personal and learning needs of every pupil and ensures that all safeguarding requirements are rigorously met. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, benefit particularly from this valuable support and make good progress. Most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. They benefit from good teaching and a well organised and very well-resourced provision. They make good progress. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Year 4, they attain standards that are above average.

Teachers manage their classes very effectively to ensure that pupils stay focused on their work. They plan a good range of activities to stimulate pupils' desire to learn and to match their different learning needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' responses. In some lessons, their expectations of how much work pupils can achieve within the time are not so demanding and so pace can drop. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons, as reflected in their good attendance. They talk excitedly about what they have learned, particularly from such interesting topics as the Ancient Egyptians. They are very proud of some of the high quality work included in their 'take home tasks' linked to each topic. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, clearly evident in the way in which they enthusiastically participate in physical education lessons and the good range of sporting clubs.

The headteacher has made a very positive contribution to improving the school in the

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short time he has been in post. His strong, purposeful style has enabled him to gain a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs improving. Self-evaluation is accurate. Working closely with his staff, teaching has been improved and the rate of progress in mathematics has been raised. The capacity to sustain this improvement is good. The headteacher has established very accurate tracking procedures which help teachers to use assessments to check carefully on each pupil's progress. They make good use of support systems to help those who are not progressing as well as they could. However, teachers do not use assessment so well to let pupils know what they need to improve to raise the standard of their work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding by;
 - ensuring teachers consistently challenge pupils to keep their pace of work high
 - using assessments to show pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- Widen the contributions made by staff and governors in evaluating how well the school is doing and targeting improvement rigorously.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Achievement is good and is reflected in pupils' above average standards. Pupils make good progress because of the good teaching and their enthusiastic approach to learning. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to please their teachers and achieve well. Progress is carefully monitored for each pupil and any dips in performance are quickly addressed. For example, a more consistent focus in lessons and extra support for pupils whose progress had been slower than expected has raised standards in mathematics. Well-planned interventions help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. The school's good links with other local schools and organisations help extend those pupils who have a particular gift or talent, for example, when Year 2 pupils benefit from the skills of a specialist French teacher to produce their own play 'Les trois petit cochons'.

Pupils make good contributions to the school and local communities. For example, the school council was fully involved in drawing up and agreeing the Code of Conduct which helps each pupil know how they are expected to behave. Pupils' understanding of the world of work is enhanced by their involvement in fundraising events for charities and their good attendance and attainment prepare them well for the future. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. The social and moral aspects are particularly strong. Cultural development is improving, for example through an increasing range of visits to different places of worship and an increased focus on cultural traditions in the curriculum themes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching is a key factor in helping each pupil to achieve well. Lessons are planned very carefully and teachers use a good range of strategies to ensure that pupils stay focused on their work. They employ some innovative approaches, for example, an imaginative use of a 'magic number box' captures Year 1 pupils' interest and encourages them to improve their basic number skills. Teachers use questions successfully to encourage pupils to share their ideas, although they do not consistently use challenging questions to extend more able pupils. Most lessons are paced well, although teachers do not always ensure that pupils achieve as much as they can within each lesson. Year 4 pupils confirm that they find discussions with their teachers and the marking of their work help them improve, although few know exactly what they need to focus on to raise standards.

The curriculum offers a good range of interesting activities and is enhanced well by extra-curricular clubs, visits and visitors. For example, the excitement of Year 3 pupils was evident as they used information to plan their day to see as many animals as they could in a forthcoming visit to Whipsnade Zoo. Good use is made of cross-curricular themes, often in close association with other local schools, to extend pupils' learning and encourage an enthusiastic involvement in their work. These themes are planned carefully to meet different learning needs and parents and carers are encouraged to contribute through the 'take home tasks'.

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's provision in all aspects of care, guidance and support is outstanding. In particular, pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, benefit from lots of individual attention. The school has excellent links with all external agencies. These are used very effectively to work with the school and the family. This ensures that support and guidance are very well-targeted to meet a wide range of social and learning needs. Pupils benefit from high quality support in classroom activities and through effective induction processes when they join the school and when they move to the middle school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has developed the systems to track achievement and monitor teaching. These have successfully improved some key aspects, for example the quality of teaching. One parent commented, 'I am amazed at what he has done since he started.' The headteacher has managed a period of personnel changes well to establish an effective team of staff and governors. They are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating and strategically planning improvements, although these roles are not fully developed. Governors support and challenge well and are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities. The school promotes equal opportunities well and is successful in tackling any discrimination, with all teachers using improved tracking to ensure that all pupils receive support and guidance when needed.

The school has a good partnership with parents and carers which contributes successfully to their children's learning. For example, transition visits in each year group help them be aware of the changing expectations for their children's development. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. The headteacher and nominated governor have a very clear understanding of what is required and are proactive in ensuring that the school is kept safe and secure. All staff are suitably trained in child protection and there are very good systems for recording any concerns. The school is successful in actively promoting cohesion within the school and local communities, for example, by encouraging the various ethnic groups to confidently share their cultural similarities and differences. It evaluates the impact of this work and has used the focus of the World Cup to promote a wider sense of the global community through looking in detail at communities within South Africa.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children greatly enjoy their learning and make good progress because of good teaching, an attractive learning environment with vibrant displays and a very good range of resources. These capture children's interest and stimulate their imagination, for example, when exploring a range of different vegetables linked to the story they are reading in class. The school provides a good balance between activities which are led by adults and those that the children choose to do themselves. Relationships are good. Staff know the children well and have a good understanding of their different interests and how they learn. Adults provide consistently good support to each child and promote their learning successfully. Occasionally, children spend too much time in the carpet area listening to instructions. This limits some opportunities, especially for more able children, to achieve as well as they can.

The very well organised programme offers a wide range of practical, hands-on activities that develop confidence and independence. The leadership and management are good and have enabled children to continue to progress well during a period of staff change. Staff make good use of detailed assessment information to ensure that the progress of individuals is carefully checked in all areas of learning. This assessment information is used well to inform teaching. By the time they join Year 1, children attain average standards overall, with some children attaining above average levels.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school. They value its friendly, caring and supportive approach, which helps their children to feel exceptionally safe and enjoy school. Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching, the interesting curriculum topics and the progress being made by their children. They feel that the school meets their child's particular needs. A small number of parents were concerned about the effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling any unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judge that these procedures are very effective and behaviour is excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Camestone 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 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 290 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	60	44	38	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	71	62	43	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	31	70	61	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	36	66	57	4	3	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	57	50	56	49	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	43	57	50	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	49	55	48	3	3	1	1
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)	50	43	58	50	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	37	66	57	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	35	60	52	11	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	28	65	57	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	61	53	49	43	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	59	43	37	2	2	1	1

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 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). 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">■ 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 pupil's 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.

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.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Camestone Lower School, Bedford, MK42 8NW

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. After spending two days in your school, talking with you about what you do, looking at your work, watching you learn and talking to your teachers, we have judged that your school is good.

You clearly enjoy school and value greatly the outstanding care and help you receive. We were pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting talking to some school councillors about how they contribute to your school, for example, helping to set up the Code of Conduct. Some Year 4 pupils told me that they enjoy the interesting topics. However, every school can improve. We have asked the headteacher and his staff to make sure that they remind you in lessons about how much work you can get through before the lesson ends, so you remember to keep working hard. You can help by trying to get on quickly. We have also asked your teachers to provide you with more consistent ways of helping you to know how well you are doing, and how to improve your work. We would encourage you to use these ways and try hard to make your work even better. We have also asked your school to provide more opportunities for governors and members of staff all to be involved in checking on how the school is doing and how they can make it even better.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector

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