

Slip End Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109440
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337287
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kirsty Janes
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Smith
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The vast majority of time was spent looking at learning: 6 teachers were seen including the specialist music teacher; 14 lessons were observed; meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of the subject departments, minutes of governors' meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition a scrutiny of pupils' work and 40 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies to maintain standards, achievement, progress and quality of learning throughout the school over time.
- The quality of provision and learning in information and communication technology and subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, and by gifted and talented and vulnerable pupils.
- The quality of learning and provision in mathematics in Years 3 and 4

Information about the school

Slip End Lower School is a small school. Most pupils come from Slip End village and the local area. A very large majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language, and no pupils are at the early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the percentage of pupils with a statement of need is well below average. A very small minority of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in one Reception class and a small Nursery class. The school has achieved the Healthy School award and Activemark. A SureStart (NCH) Children's Centre shares the school site. This provision is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

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

Slip End is an outstanding school. Pupils of all abilities achieve extremely well. Parents and pupils appreciate the high quality care and exciting learning opportunities. One parent summed up the views of the vast majority saying, 'A great school, children are very happy and flourishing, lessons are fun, staff always have time to answer questions. Children are enthusiastic about all aspects of the curriculum and are constantly challenged to achieve higher targets. Staff are passionate about creating a stimulating environment for all children to learn and they deal very effectively with any needs the children may have.'

The key strengths of the school are:

Pupils make excellent gains in their personal development because relationships are extremely strong and the school ethos is very warm and welcoming.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above those expected for all groups of pupils because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding over time.

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

Care, guidance and support are extremely strong, so pupils behave superbly well and are sensible and enthusiastic learners. Parents commented 'School is a very caring, nurturing environment.'

Pupils develop an extremely positive attitude to their learning because the curriculum meets the needs of all of them very well and they enjoy the links between subjects.

The headteacher and senior management team lead the school very effectively and have a very clear vision for its future improvement.

Excellent links with the local community and external agencies contribute very effectively to the provision.

There is an excellent commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the very best possible education. Equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination are pursued determinedly. There is also a continual drive for improvement. The very effective systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school are playing their part in sustaining high standards over time and adapting to changes within the school. The school's excellent organisation and strong, shared vision demonstrate its outstanding capacity to continue moving forward. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures meet current statutory requirements.

Key weaknesses which remain are:

Evaluation of the impact of community cohesion initiatives for national and global aspects is less well developed than for within the locality and the school.

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There are occasional missed opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage to challenge groups of children in the outdoor learning environment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure every opportunity is seized to challenge and extend children's learning in the outdoor play area. In particular:
 - complete the development of the outdoor learning space and ensure it is used to provide learning opportunities for all areas of development
 - ensure parents are fully informed about changes.
- Monitor more rigorously the impact of community cohesion at national and global levels by:
 - tracking the impact of national and global initiatives
 - using the information gained to enhance current provision
 - completing planning and organisation for the International School Award.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils really enjoy learning because lessons are very well planned and excellent relationships contribute to an exciting climate for learning. All pupils write confidently. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, there was a buzz of excitement as pupils created and wrote their own new adventure for Katie Morag. Year 1 pupils talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about Van Gogh's life and style of painting and they were really excited at the prospect of completing their sunflower pictures Year 4 pupils created their own drama sketches very effectively to communicate their excellent knowledge of life for evacuees during the Second World War.

Achievement is outstanding overall for all groups of pupils, with exceptional achievement in Year 2 for reading, writing and mathematics. The school's tracking and the inspection evidence indicate all pupils on course to reach or exceed their challenging targets. Attainment in reading and writing is exceptionally strong throughout the school and mathematics standards are above those usually found. Excellent outcomes are contributing extremely well to pupils' economic well-being. Examination of pupils' work shows that their numeracy skills in Years 3 and 4 have improved since the last inspection. Use of information and communication technology, which was identified as a weakness, is now a strength. Excellent progress enables pupils to reach standards that are well above those expected in English and above those expected in mathematics by the end of Year 4. Challenge, for all groups of pupils, has been consistent over time and focused interventions are extremely effective. Consequently more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well challenged and make excellent progress.

Other key features of pupils' outcomes are:

Pupils behave extremely well because they thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is

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reflected in their attendance that is above average.

Pupils say they feel extremely safe because relationships are excellent and they can discuss any problems they have with adults.

Pupils know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, enjoying their fruit breaks and attending well at the excellent range of activity clubs.

Pupils have extremely well-developed skills in working collaboratively and cooperatively with others in class and during break time activities such as marbles and ball games.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to their school and local community.

Pupils have an excellent awareness of other cultures, ethnicities and religions. They learn to make a very positive contribution to their school, local, national and global communities, raising money for charities such as the recent earthquake in Haiti.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Extremely strong relationships and excellent attitudes and behaviour contribute to a positive climate for learning. Teaching is outstanding overall. The large majority of lessons observed during the inspection were at least good, and teaching and learning

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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over time have been outstanding. Teachers use assessment information well to plan work that matches the needs of all groups effectively within the class. More able pupils and different groups of pupils are challenged well in the vast majority of lessons. In the very few lessons where assessment information is not used as effectively, tasks are not always matched closely enough to ensure excellent learning. Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and pupils enjoy well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others during, 'talking to learn' sessions. Teachers give good oral feedback to pupils on how to improve their work and marking is good. Pupils with additional needs are supported very well by teaching assistants, so they make the same excellent progress as their peers.

The curriculum is extremely well planned and matched to meet the needs of both the more able and those who need additional support. As well as English and mathematics, art, history, music, physical education and information and communication technology are strengths. The very strong personal and social education programme assists pupils' outstanding personal development. Specialist teaching in physical education and music enhances the provision. Pupils enjoy the curriculum and this contributes to their growing enthusiasm for learning. Curriculum enrichment is extremely good and there are a wide range of visits, clubs and activities, which are well attended.

The extremely caring ethos results in very happy pupils who thoroughly enjoy school life. Pupils' needs are central to the work of the school and all adults effectively help children and parents to get the best from learning. Support for pupils who need additional help is extremely well planned. The school works very well with external support agencies to support all pupils. Excellent support is given to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Extremely good relationships with vulnerable pupils and their families ensure these pupils make the same excellent progress as their peers. All pupils receive extremely clear guidance on their behaviour and this is reflected in their outstanding conduct.

Induction and transition arrangements for children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, at other points during the school year and when moving on to other schools are excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's skilful management and superb leadership have permeated the

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school and are the key reasons for sustained high standards and quality over time. There is strong, enthusiastic commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the best possible education. Leaders communicate ambition extremely effectively and they have a very thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The monitoring of pupils' progress throughout the school is excellent and highlights any areas of weakness, leading to improvement. The headteacher is dedicated to making sure pupils achieve well and that staff bring high quality to their work. She and the senior management team lead the school with competence and compassion, valuing the work of others and encouraging them to take responsibility.

The governing body ably supports staff in work to improve the school and is increasing the degree of challenge offered to ensure school improvement initiatives are successful. Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school effectively. Tracking of progress over time is extremely thorough and senior leaders quickly identify any dips and swiftly put sensible strategies and interventions in place to promote improvement. Appropriate developmental areas to further improve the effectiveness of the school are clearly identified in the school improvement plan.

The cultural diversity of the school is valued and celebrated and, consequently, the promotion of community cohesion is effective because pupils develop an excellent understanding of the school and local community for their age. Monitoring the outcomes of national and global initiatives is less well developed than for the school and local community. The school promotes equalities expertly, as reflected in the profile of high achievement across different groups. All safeguarding procedures and checks on adults are robust. Excellent partnership links with local schools, the Children's Centre and various support agencies contribute to the school's excellent provision. The school deploys its resources extremely well, particularly to improve provision for pupils who need the extra support and intervention.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Nursery with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. Children make consistently good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and, by the time they enter Year 1, their attainment is above average.

Staff are skilled in providing a wide range of challenging activities both indoors and outdoors, which enables the children to get off to a flying start. They challenge children to learn to share, consider others and develop their communication skills. All children make good progress in all areas of learning. Induction arrangements are extremely well considered. Phonics is well taught and challenges children rigorously to sound the beginnings and ends of words clearly. Good links with parents are evident, although some feel they were not fully informed about recent changes in the provision. Children in Reception gained really good knowledge after a visiting parent explained the Chinese New Year, shared resources, read the children a Chinese fairy story and taught them a Chinese song and simple words in Chinese. All children know the current year is the Tiger and a significant number know their own Chinese sign.

The school have been developing the outdoor learning environment. It is used well to stimulate learning, and activities excite and interest the children. Teaching is good but occasionally there are missed opportunities to challenge groups of children. All activities are carefully planned with opportunities to learn through activities led by adults and those children choose for themselves. Tracking in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used well to plan challenges for more able children. The provision is well led and managed.

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

There were 40 parental responses; this is a good response for a school of this size. The large majority of parents are very happy with the school, they feel it is welcoming and friendly. Most parents say that their children enjoy attending and that they make good progress. Parents regard the school as extremely caring and supportive and say the staff are approachable. They identify a number of strengths in the school including the

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activities, the relationships with staff, the good start children receive in Nursery and Reception, the school ethos and the pupils' enjoyment. The majority of parental criticisms were offered constructively and were mainly concerned with the starting times in Early Years Foundation Stage and their lack of understanding of the recent changes. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents and judge that the school is doing all it can to manage the recent changes in Early Years Foundation Stage.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Slip End 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	65	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	65	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	55	16	40	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	60	13	33	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	67	12	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	60	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	58	16	40	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)	18	45	15	38	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	48	16	40	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	53	17	43	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	50	17	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	50	15	38	3	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	73	9	23	2	5	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 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

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 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 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.



Monday 15 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Slip End Lower School, Luton, LU1 4DD

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We will remember how extremely polite and considerate you all were and how beautifully you all behaved. You and your parents told us that Slip End is an excellent school, and we agree. These are the things we found that your school does well.

You get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception and make excellent progress through the school. You reach standards by the end of Year 4 that are better than in most schools because teaching is outstanding.

You all enjoy learning very much and your attendance is above average.

Your behaviour is excellent and you are extremely sensible and know how to keep safe.

You really enjoy and benefit from the many fun activities, clubs, visits and visitors.

Your school cares for you extremely well and teaches you a lot about how to be healthy and to care for others.

Your school council is well organised and is working very well with your teachers to make sure that your school continues to improve.

Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors lead the school extremely well and all the staff work effectively together as a team to make sure that Slip End is a safe and secure, fun place to learn.

There are two things we have identified for staff and governors to improve.

Make sure that children in the Nursery and Reception classes always get challenging things to do outdoors.

Make sure that your teachers track and record more rigorously how well you learn about different people in the world, in this country and abroad.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future. You can all help by continuing to work really hard.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector

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