

# Flitwick Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109452
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356546
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marion Wallace

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>	Primary
<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>	247
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Phillip Thompson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanna New
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Temple Way Flitwick Bedford MK45 1LU
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<b>Email address</b>	flitwick@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–9
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 25 lessons given by nine teachers. They held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of subject departments, minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' work, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 117 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Provision for writing and progress in pupils' writing skills throughout the school especially for boys in the Year 3 and 4 mixed age classes.
- The progress of the more-able pupils in writing.
- How well provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets the needs of different groups of children especially in communication, language and literacy.
- How well teachers challenge different groups of children in the mixed age classes.

## Information about the school

Flitwick Lower School is an average sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average and there are no pupils in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, but the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught in three mixed age classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has achieved the Activemark, Healthy Schools status and silver Artsmark. The headteacher is new to the school and has been in post for a year. There is a pre-school play group, a before-school club and an after school club on the school site. This provision is not managed by the governors of the school and was not inspected by the team.

**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?**

**3**

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

**3**

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Flitwick Lower School is satisfactory. It has some good features and the headteacher, governors and senior leaders are particularly successful in promoting pupils personal development, links with the community and safety. They are rightly aware that improving attainment in writing remains the first priority. Achievement while satisfactory, is inconsistent across different groups of pupils and across subjects. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and have a positive attitude to their work because the school is a safe community that respects and values all individuals. One parent summarised the views of many: 'Children enjoy school, it is a very friendly, caring environment.' The school has a range of other key strengths.

- Its ethos is friendly, warm and welcoming, and relationships are very good.
- Pupils all feel very secure in school and are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns.
- Pupils' achievement is good in mathematics and attainment is above average by the time they leave the school.
- Levels of attendance are above average and there are rigorous procedures in place to ensure this is maintained.
- Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to their learning. They are sensible and responsible.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The 'lunch time angels' club is well attended and gives pupils an excellent opportunity to reflect on life and to consider ways to improve their contribution to it.
- Partnerships with the local community, Redborne Pyramid and local businesses are good.
- The headteacher and senior management team lead the school well and have a clear vision for its future improvement.

The rigorous systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school are playing a positive part in improving its performance. The work done to improve attainment and progress in mathematics and the effective action being taken to improve achievement in writing demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. However, some key weaknesses remain.

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- Teachers do not consistently ensure good learning. For example, tasks and questions are not always matched closely to the learning needs of pupils.
- Achievement in writing is lower than in mathematics and reading. Handwriting skills and spelling are weaknesses.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage opportunities to challenge and extend children are sometimes missed especially outdoors. Assessment is not always used rigorously enough to ensure all children make good progress in all areas of learning, especially in communication, language and literacy.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Accelerate progress and, by January 2012, raise attainment in writing throughout the school by:
  - ensuring key skills in English are taught consistently well
  - improving pupils' handwriting skills and spelling
  - ensuring every opportunity is given for pupils to use their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that, by January 2012, 75% of teaching is of good quality or better by:
  - making certain that all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons that match the needs and provide appropriate challenge for all pupils, especially the more able
  - helping pupils understand how to improve their work through consistently good quality marking
  - ensuring all teachers target appropriately challenging questions for different abilities in order to fully extend their learning.
- By January 2012, raise the quality of provision in the Reception classes to good or better by ensuring:
  - teachers use assessment information rigorously to inform their planning and give a closer match of work to ability, particularly in outdoor learning
  - children have more opportunities to develop their writing skills.

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

**3**

The strong relationships contribute to a positive climate in which pupils enjoy learning. Academic standards are average by the end of Year 4 and overall pupils make satisfactory progress. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls, nor pupils in different year groups in the mixed age classes. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. While achievement is satisfactory, the quality of learning in lessons is variable, especially in

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writing. Expectations are not always sufficiently high especially for more-able pupils, and too few pupils reach the higher levels in writing. However, pupils reach above average attainment in mathematics because challenge and opportunities to use numeracy skills are often good.

The quality of writing, especially handwriting and spelling is variable and expectations for presentation are sometimes too low. A few pupils, parents and carers say that the work is sometimes too easy. Pupils do not demonstrate or explore their writing across a range of different subjects, but there are some examples of good practice. For example, pupils in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class made good progress learning to use their imagination and communicate ideas to others. Inspired by a popular story they produced a short drama sketch in preparation for their writing task to produce ‘fantasy fiction.’ They were keen to communicate their quest challenge to the rest of the group and had a clear idea for their writing task. Some pupils were starting to use interesting and lively vocabulary. Pupils in Year 2 were equally enthusiastic about producing their own story books inspired by a Katie Morag story..

Pupils behave sensibly. They say they feel very safe in school and they show good awareness of how to keep safe outside school. Pupils’ good knowledge of healthy living and enjoyment of physical activity and physical education lessons are reflected in awards the school has won. They can describe a healthy diet and talk about the beneficial effects of exercise. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their rights and responsibilities and they have a good understanding of their own contribution to the school and local community. They work well with others and opportunities to discuss work with a partner are well developed throughout the school. School council members talk sensibly about their contribution to the school and how they intend to raise money to help look after the school rabbits. Pupils’ awareness of cultural differences, both in the local community and globally, is developing well through visits to different places of worship in Bedford. Pupils’ awareness of different cultures in the United Kingdom is less well developed.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>

<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 extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan interesting activities, often using well-chosen resources. They manage behaviour well. In lessons observed during the inspection that were of good quality, teachers used a range of methods to encourage effective learning and matched work closely to what pupils needed to learn next. However, across subjects and often in writing, there is not always a sharp enough challenge for more-able pupils who find the work too easy. Pace of learning then drops. Teachers do not always focus sufficiently on key skills in writing, so pupils do not always use and apply them sufficiently well. In addition, opportunities to use writing are sometimes missed because too many worksheets are used.

Questions are mainly used effectively by teachers to involve pupils and encourage discussion. However, they are not always sufficiently fine-tuned to different pupils' abilities, so opportunities to challenge and clarify pupils' understanding are not always taken. Teachers mark work conscientiously but the quality of feedback to pupils on how to improve their work is variable. Targets are used well in some classes; for example in writing in Year 2 where pupils have clear guidance about their next steps. However, this is not the case in all subjects or classes.

Pupils enjoy the new curriculum. It links knowledge in different subjects well, though writing skills are not sufficiently integrated. Curriculum enrichment is good and pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities such as gymnastics and gardening, and these clubs are well attended. The 'values' education is making a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pastoral care is strong. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs receive appropriate support and this contributes to their growing confidence. Pupils with more moderate learning difficulties receive limited support in class and sometimes struggle when work set for the whole class does not meet their needs. Induction and transition arrangements are good.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>

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**The effectiveness of care, guidance and support**

**3**

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and the governing body demonstrate drive and ambition to take the school forward. The headteacher has a clear vision and is determined to secure improvement. She has an accurate view of teaching and uses this information to sharpen provision and target the most important areas for improvement. The governing body supports and challenges the school satisfactorily. However, many of its members have only been in post for a short period. Middle managers support senior managers well and have been involved in some monitoring of their areas of responsibility.

The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities to raise the effectiveness of the school from satisfactory to good. Close partnerships, such as with the local authority and the Redborne Pyramid are already having a positive impact on outcomes. The school has improved provision and outcomes for mathematics since the last inspection and this is now a strength.

The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures reflect current good practice. Training is of good quality and issues of safety integrated well into the curriculum. In order to promote community cohesion, the school has established links with a school in Kenya and good links locally. Leaders have suitably well-advanced plans to broaden pupils' understanding of people in different parts of this country and overseas.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle extremely well into the Reception classes because relationships are strong. Most children enter Reception with the expected skills and knowledge for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall and by the time they enter Year 1 attainment is broadly as expected for this age group. Progress in different areas of learning is, however, inconsistent. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development but their skills in linking sounds and letters and in writing are less strong. However, the recently introduced programme for learning letter and word sounds is securely in place and good teaching of this was observed. Opportunities to provide activities that foster writing skills are not always effectively planned. Other than this, staff provide a satisfactory range of indoor activities. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn through a good balance of sessions led by adults and those where they choose for themselves. They learn to play co-operatively with each other; for example, when they planned and built a castle for a princess. They enjoy the healthy fruit snacks and they know about the benefits of healthy food. Assessment systems are in place but these are not always used effectively to ensure children have appropriate activities, especially the more-able children. For example, the outdoor area is not always used well because adults sometimes miss opportunities to challenge children in their outdoor play. Care and welfare are sound and this contributes satisfactorily to children’s achievement. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The leader knows what works well and what needs to improve.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

A comparatively high number of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Most responses showed they are satisfied with the school. They regard the school as happy, welcoming and friendly. They say their children enjoy attending and most are happy with their progress. Parents and carers regard the school as caring and supportive. They identify strengths of the school as the extra-curricular activities, how the school keeps the pupils safe, the relationships with staff and the leadership of the headteacher. The inspection confirmed these positive aspects.

The majority of criticisms were offered constructively and were mainly concerned with the progress some more-able pupils are making and the provision in the mixed

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age classes. Inspectors found that challenge for more-able pupils could be better. Provision in the mixed age classes is satisfactory.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Flitwick 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 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 247 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	66	34	29	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	56	47	40	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	39	33	72	62	6	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	36	66	56	8	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	40	67	57	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	47	40	60	51	8	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	50	55	47	3	3	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)	57	49	50	43	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	38	65	56	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	35	55	47	8	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	31	65	56	7	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	49	42	60	51	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	57	49	54	46	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 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	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**

31 January 2011

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of Flitwick Lower School, Bedford, MK45 1LU**

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We enjoyed your assemblies and will remember how enthusiastically you talked to us about the school rabbits, Chocolate and Cream. We found your school satisfactory with some good features.

- You like coming to school and your attendance is above average.
- You make satisfactory progress through the school and you reach broadly average academic standards by the end of Year 4.
- Your mathematics is strong. You make good progress in mathematics and you reach academic standards that are above average.
- You all feel very safe in school because you can talk to the adults if you have a problem.
- You enjoy and benefit from the many activities, clubs, visits and visitors.
- Your school cares for you and teaches you to be healthy and to know about healthy lifestyles.
- Your school council is well organised and is working well to help improve the school.
- All staff and members of the governing body work well together to ensure your school continues to improve.
- Your headteacher gives a strong lead to everyone.

There are three things that we have identified for staff and the governing body to improve:

- make sure that you all reach higher standards in writing
- ensure that all your teachers use assessment information to plan work that always challenges you, especially those who find the work easy, and give you comments to help you improve when marking your work
- make sure children in the Reception classes are always challenged as much as possible so they make consistently good progress, especially in developing their writing skills and when using the outdoor learning environment.

You can help with these improvements by telling your teachers when your work is too easy and continuing to work really hard.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace  
Lead Inspector

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