

Ravensden CofE VA Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109623
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	356587
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Knox
Headteacher	Barbara North
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited two assemblies and nine lessons, observing four teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 37 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- The level of expectation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Boys' attainment and progress in writing in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' knowledge of other faiths, customs, cultures and beliefs.
- The contribution of all teaching staff to the future development of the school.

Information about the school

Ravensden C of E Lower is considerably smaller than most schools of its type. The very large majority of its pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage is gradually increasing but remains below that found nationally in primary schools. None of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, the proportion holding a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found in other primary schools. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009. The school holds Healthy School status. The inspection included the breakfast and after-school clubs, which are managed by the governing body, but not the privately-run on-site pre-school.

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

This is a good school. Central to the school's success are the good quality of care and the good relationships with parents and carers. Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and they appreciate their views being valued. Their attendance is above average. In lessons, and around the school, their behaviour is consistently good. Parents and carers are pleased with the school. One wrote, 'A lovely school with caring Christian values. Staff know the individual needs of children and are genuinely concerned about their welfare and education'.

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Reception class. Despite some good teaching, there are inconsistencies, for example in the deployment of staff, the use of assessment and the use of the outdoor area. In Years 1 to 4, pupils make good progress. Pupils make better progress in Years 1-4 because teaching is stronger and teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve are higher. Attainment varies slightly from year to year because of the small numbers in each cohort. Attainment is typically above and sometimes well-above the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4.

All staff know the pupils well and encourage them positively in their learning. The level of care, support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. This enables them to make good progress from their various starting points by meeting their different needs. Teaching in most lessons is good. The recently introduced assessment procedures help consolidate pupils' knowledge and provide them with clear guidance on how to improve further. Pupils enjoy the well-thought-out approach to the curriculum and the good range of opportunities for enrichment. Close links with local schools and other agencies provide pupils with opportunities to take part in events, thus enriching their learning experiences. The curriculum ensures pupils have a good understanding of healthy living. It supports their spiritual, moral and social development effectively and this contributes to their good behaviour. However, pupils' understanding of other faiths, values, customs and cultures is only satisfactory. This is because pupils have insufficient opportunities to link with people from other cultures. Pupils' contribution to others beyond the local school community is developing satisfactorily.

The headteacher has made a good start in implementing strategies to further raise attainment. Within a relatively short time, she has worked with staff and governors to accurately identify and evaluate the schools' strengths and weaknesses. The priorities for improvement are clearly laid out in the detailed school development plan. Teaching staff are clear about what they want to do to improve subjects for which they have responsibility. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the collective leadership of the school, for example in critically analysing pupils' progress and outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The governing body is supportive and provides a good level of challenge to the

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leadership team. Taking all things into consideration, including the progress the school has made since the last inspection, the school is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making better use of assessment procedures to raise the expectations of staff and children
 - making sure that teaching is consistently good.
- Extend pupils' understanding of the wider community and others' faiths, values, customs and beliefs by developing national and international links.
- Increase the contribution of the teaching staff to the strategic development of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge similar to those expected for their age. The vast majority enter Year 1 with average attainment. They work hard in lessons. They are motivated and respond well to challenge. They enjoy the opportunities to work together in pairs and larger groups. By the end of Year 2 girls tend to reach slightly higher standards than the boys in writing. The school has addressed this through a focus on accelerating all pupils' progress, by making greater use of opportunities to converse and develop language. Pupils are encouraged to make a written record of each other's comments. This is proving effective in developing their writing skills and raising attainment. Consequently, the gap between boys and girls is narrowing. Older pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. In a Year 4 science lesson, pupils confidently listed the equipment and recorded their method for making a compass. They used subject specific vocabulary well and wrote in carefully constructed sentences at a level above that expected for their age. Their understanding of magnetism was successfully reinforced as they used the interactive white board to identify materials that respond to a magnetic force. They were further challenged by the teacher who asked them to identify the use of magnets in every day life, before turning their attention to the uses of and the creation of an electromagnet. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress similar to their peers because their needs are quickly identified and they receive well targeted support.

Pupils' have a good understanding of healthy living and of the importance of taking physical exercise. This contributed to the school being awarded Healthy School status. Pupils are keen to take responsibility, undertake tasks around the school and to become members of the school council. They raise funds for national and international charities and take part in local events, for example, pupils eagerly prepared for taking part in a Christmas music festival at a local church. Pupils are reflective and have a good understanding of right and wrong. Their knowledge of other faiths, cultures, religions and beliefs is satisfactory. However, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared to live in today's culturally diverse society. Pupils from the different minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers. Pupils' above average attainment, good achievement and social skills provides them with a secure basis for the next stage in their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils know they can turn to staff if they have any concerns and are confident that any issues will be followed up. Pupils are increasingly being encouraged to become independent, to take responsibility for themselves and to help others. Members of the school council were keen to explain to their peers the purpose of the recently purchased 'friendship stop'.

Support and guidance for pupils meets their needs at significant points in their time at school and, especially for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are well embedded in the work of the school. This ensures that they make good progress from their starting point and needs. The school offers a breakfast club and an after-school club. Pupils enjoy attending and this fosters good relationships between parents and carers and the school.

In lessons, teachers share the purpose of the activities so that pupils are clear about the intended outcomes. The lessons proceed at a quick pace and questions are used effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to consolidate their learning. There is a good balance between teachers' and pupils' contributions. Teachers make regular use of pupils sharing ideas with a 'talk partner'. This helps the pupils develop their social skills and their ability to communicate with others. However, in the occasional lesson, some pupils are not sufficiently challenged. This is because assessment information has not been used to

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identify work and set challenges that are appropriate to the needs and ability of individual pupils. Pupils' work is generally marked well. However, not all marking provides pupils with sufficient guidance to improve their work to meet their targets.

The curriculum supports pupils' learning in mathematics and English effectively and is adjusted to meet the needs of most groups of pupils. It is well matched to the needs of those who find learning difficult. A carefully constructed theme or topic approach is used to promote pupils' learning in different subjects. Good links are made between subjects and effective use is made of information and communication technology to stimulate learning. The music curriculum is enhanced by specialist music teachers who visit on a regular basis. Partnerships with other schools and organisations contribute effectively to accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils are keen to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities which contribute much to their personal development.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly and accurately evaluated the strengths and areas for development within the school. She has gained the confidence of governors, staff, parents and pupils to help drive improvement. Staff are enthusiastic and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. However, they are not sufficiently involved in rigorously analysing the school's performance and in its strategic development. The headteacher has successfully introduced changes to the assessment procedures and to the monitoring of teaching and learning. Although these have yet to be consolidated, they are already making a difference to pupils' learning and their rate of progress. Links have been formed with local service organisations, which has led to the creation of a garden area. Pupils are able to grow fruit and vegetables. This supports their understanding of healthy living. Improvements have also been made to the outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governing body sets challenging targets and monitors the work of the school well. It ensures that the school's safeguarding, checks on staff recruitment and child protection procedures are robust. Procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe are firmly established in school routines. The governing body ensures equality of opportunities and tackles discrimination well, for example by investigating any discrepancies in performance between groups of pupils. Community cohesion within the school and within the local area, for example with other schools, the church and parents is promoted well. However, links with contrasting areas in this country and abroad are at an early stage.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children start school with skills and knowledge at least in line with those expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. Planning ensures that all areas of children's learning are covered. There is a reasonable balance between activities led by the adults and those that children choose for themselves. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing the children's skills to become independent and to work together. However, children's attainment is not as high as it was two years ago. Staff demonstrate some good teaching skills, but this is not consistently the case. At times, the pace of learning slows because the children are uncertain of the purpose of the activities. Additional support is not always deployed effectively to extend children's learning. Expectations, particularly for the more-able children are not sufficiently high.

Assessments are undertaken on a regular basis and recorded systematically in the children's learning journal but are not consistently used effectively to raise expectations and to ensure that the work challenges all children. Nevertheless, the level of care is good. Children settle into school easily, enjoy learning and quickly grow in confidence within a safe learning environment. They follow instructions, develop their social skills and behave well. Relationships between children and with the adults are good. Routines are well established. Children quickly understand the importance of personal hygiene and healthy living.

Teachers and support staff work hard to create an attractive and stimulating indoor learning environment. The classroom is organised and children's work is celebrated and displayed effectively. The outdoor area is developing well as an extension to the classroom but its potential has yet to be maximised. Links with the onsite pre school are well established and aid the smooth transition to the Reception class.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was higher than most schools. Nearly all respondents were happy with their child's experiences at this school. They stated that their children feel safe, enjoy school and the school helps their children to adopt a healthy life style. Inspection evidence supports these views. A few parents and carers feel that the school does not take account of their views and suggestion. Inspection evidence indicates that the school works well with parents and takes due notice of their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ravensden CoFE VA 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	78	6	16	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	33	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	59	14	38	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	59	13	35	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	62	12	32	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	51	16	43	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	65	13	35	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)	20	54	14	38	0	0	3	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	59	13	35	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	49	15	41	2	5	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	43	16	43	4	11	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	20	54	14	38	3	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	68	10	27	1	3	1	3

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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 pupils' 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.



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ravensden CofE VA Lower School, Bedford, MK44 2RW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were pleased that you told us you enjoy school, that the staff take good care of you and make certain that you are safe. You clearly enjoy school because your attendance is above average.

Your school provides you with a good education. You settle happily into school in the Reception class and make a satisfactory progress. Teachers build on this well in the older classes where you make good progress. The teachers ensure that you enjoy your lessons by teaching well and by making them interesting. The standards you reach by the end of Year 4 are above expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. You have a good understanding of healthy living and keeping safe. We were delighted to see that you behave well in class and around the school. You make a good contribution to the school and local community but need to do a little more to help others in this country and abroad. You could tell me a lot about your own customs, values and beliefs. Your knowledge and understanding of how other people cultures is less well developed.

We have asked the school to do these things to help it improve further.

Make certain that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress by making better use of assessment information and ensuring that all lessons are equally good

Establish links with schools in other parts of this country and abroad to help you develop your awareness of other people, their cultures, values and beliefs.

Make sure that all the teachers contribute more to the leadership of the school.

Please remember, to make your school better you must play your part by always trying your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones

Lead inspector

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