

Lifton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113256
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357301
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Alexander Baxter

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graeme Burriball
Headteacher	Kui Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who visited 12 lessons and observed five teachers. The inspectors also attended one assembly, observed break and lunchtime activities, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers. The inspectors looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were evaluated. In addition, questionnaires completed by 67 parents and carers, 50 pupils and nine staff were analysed. ♦

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked at these aspects in detail.

- How well does the school ensure that all the pupils within the small year groups develop their skills year on year in relation to their differing needs, including those arriving other than at the normal time from other schools and/or backgrounds?
- How well are pupils enabled to develop their independent learning skills in support of their academic achievement as they move through the school?
- How well do leaders and managers use information from their monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school to bring improvement, especially in pupils' progress through Years 3 to 6?

Information about the school

This is a small rural primary school with four mixed-age classes. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs vary across the year groups and are above average. ♦ These needs are related mostly to speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above that normally expected. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed-age class, with Year 1 pupils. A privately run pre-school operates on the school site and shares some of the school's outdoor facilities.

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

Lifton Community School is an inclusive school which provides a satisfactory, but improving, quality of education. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average and shows that pupils across the range of needs and abilities achieve satisfactorily.

For a period following the previous inspection of February 2008, instability in staffing reduced the effectiveness of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 and slowed pupils' progress. Efforts to tackle this decline were not immediately successful for uncertainty regarding staffing and finance also adversely affected the confidence of some staff and parents and carers, and constrained the school's ability to rectify inconsistencies in provision.

In recent terms, the headteacher, encouraged and enabled by the effective support of the governing body, has worked more flexibly in support of classroom practice. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. By working collaboratively and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning more effectively, the headteacher and senior colleagues have re-established pupils' good behaviour and have accelerated progress in Key Stage 2, allowing pupils to catch-up with past slower progress. Continued strengths in Reception and Years 1 and 2, and an increasing number of pupils making good progress by the end of Year 6, augur well for the future and show a satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

Over the past year, staff have improved the way they assess pupils' achievement and now have a more accurate view of what needs to be done to address previous underachievement and to accelerate pupils' progress. In particular, the specific use of marking, including by the headteacher, to bridge gaps in pupils' skills is helping the pupils themselves to contribute more effectively to their own, and to each other's, learning and progress. Consequently, the quality and consistency of teaching and learning has also improved and is now satisfactory.

Expectations of what pupils can and should achieve, particularly by some of the pupils themselves, still vary across Years 3 to 6, however. As a result, improvement still has some way to go before the good teaching and learning evident in Reception and Years 1 and 2 becomes a consistent feature across the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and make a successful start to school life in the small Reception and Year 1 class. Pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2 in response to a consistent focus on empowering them as independent learners. The pupils' involvement in evaluating work is an improving feature of the satisfactory progress now evident in Years 3 to 6. At times, though, there is too much whole-class teaching and this restricts the time available for pupils to undertake independent work at their own level. As a result, some pupils are not able to work independently or use and apply basic writing and numeracy skills well enough.

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The pupils' above average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school and the school's good partnership with parents and carers. All the staff and volunteers promote warm relationships with the pupils and sustain good care, guidance and support to rightly help pupils to feel and be safe.

Good links with the local community and with other agencies, including support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enable all pupils to experience a broad and interesting range of learning activities both in and out of school. As a result, pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well and show good empathy with others in their community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the course of the next year, raise pupils' achievements through Years 3 to 6, especially their literacy and numeracy skills, by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can, and should, attain as they move through Key Stage 2
 - continuing the emphasis on involving pupils in self-evaluation, so that they understand how to use and apply their basic skills to enrich their writing and work out how to solve problems.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the school over the next two terms, especially in Years 3 to 6, by:
 - reducing the amount of whole-class teaching
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to choose and follow their own learning activities and so develop their independence as learners and accelerate progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Observations of the way adults sustain pupils' interest in lessons in Reception and Years 1 and 2 clearly show good learning and progress by pupils in these year groups. Visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' assessments in Years 3 to 6 indicate improving and now satisfactory progress. This applies equally to all groups, including pupils new to the school and others with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Observations of various activities, including assembly, lunch and playtimes, and small group out-of-class support sessions, also showed that pupils enjoy their time at the school. In recent years, children's skills on entry to Reception have mostly matched those expected nationally for children of this age. From such starting points, the average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 reflect pupils' mostly satisfactory achievement.

Pupils are making improved and mostly sound progress through Years 3 to 6. However, as teachers share clear learning intentions with the pupils more effectively, the number of pupils who previously underachieved is reducing and more are making good progress, especially those with greater ability in writing. This was evident during a guided reading group session, with more-able pupils in Years 5 and 6, where pupils felt confident to express their ideas and to progress at a faster pace. Although attainment continues to rise, some pupils still have difficulty using literacy skills to construct complex sentences, applying number facts speedily to solve mathematical problems and in working independently.

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Pupils behave well, say that they feel safe and enjoy school. These are clearly reflected in their good attendance, eager participation in lunchtime activities and by their full engagement in practical group work. At times, though, in Years 3 to 6, learning is constrained by too much chatter and by a few pupils who could work harder and expect more of themselves. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities as school councillors and show good adoption of healthy lifestyles and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their friendly relationships and positive sharing of ideas with their 'Talk Partners'. ♦ By the time pupils leave the school, their ability to make and sustain friendships and satisfactory academic achievement prepare them soundly for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
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	3
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?

New appointments and collaborative planning are improving the quality of teaching and learning. Good teaching and learning in Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes are typified by high expectations, plenty of practical activity and clear guidance for pupils on how to become good individual learners. This was exemplified well in a mathematics lesson in Years 1 and 2, when pupils used dice and number lines to explore and advance their number skills. Improving and now satisfactory teaching in Years 3 to 6 is being further strengthened by involving pupils in self-evaluation and by clear guidance on how to improve in teachers' marking. Positive features in all classes include warm relationships, effective use of interactive whiteboards and clear 'I can' learning objectives for the pupils.

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Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those new to the school or with more ability; such as when, during group work in the Years 5 and 6 class, pupils wrote instructions about how to make 'gruesome biscuits'. Similarly effective group learning activity was seen in the Years 3 and 4 class, for example, when a governor assisted more-able pupils in how to interpret mathematical problems. Teachers are also encouraging pupils to discuss and develop their ideas with each other, as 'Talking Partners', and this is extending their speaking and listening skills.

◆ At times, though, in Years 3 to 6, teachers spend too much time talking to whole-class or large groups and this leads to some pupils disengaging from learning because discussions are not always matched to their abilities.

Good care, guidance and support promote the pupils' good behaviour, attendance and relationships. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils new to the school are well supported. However, at times, adult direction, for pupils in Years 3 to 6, is not always sufficient to prevent unnecessary pupil chatter and fidgeting, which, as other pupils say, 'distracts learning'. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, events and visits to places such as Buckland Abbey, which enhance the pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles, sporting skills and cultural understanding. The school also uses topics such as 'Tudors' effectively to raise interest levels across the mixed-age classes. On occasion, over-long lesson introductions in Years 3 to 6 restrict the time available for pupils to work more effectively as individuals and to use and further develop their literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher plays a key role in promoting the inclusive community ethos of the school and is well supported by all staff. Together with improved continuity in the way pupils' behaviour is managed, this inclusive ethos ensures that pupils have equal opportunity to take part in the full range of activities and are kept free from discrimination.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations well, as seen in the effective way that pupils' welfare is safeguarded through all the necessary staff appointment, child protection and risk assessment procedures and checks. The governing body offers both good support and challenge. By enabling the headteacher to increase her monitoring and evaluation role, governors have contributed to the school's improved, and now satisfactory, self-evaluation. Strengthened monitoring arrangements mean that the senior leadership team is now better informed, has re-established at least satisfactory teaching and learning

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through Years 3 to 6, and has a sound capability to drive improvement. However, strategies such as 'bridge the gap' marking have not yet been in place long enough secure good teaching across the school. In addition, temporary staffing arrangements still mean that some staff have several responsibilities to fulfil, limiting their ability to contribute to better effect across the school as a whole.

The school promotes community cohesion well. Strengths in promoting the school's local community are accompanied by good opportunities to learn about the national and global communities. Encouraged by the headteacher, teachers invite parents from differing backgrounds to visit the school, link with more culturally diverse schools and plan events linked with various religious festivals, Chinese New Year, for example, in order to promote the pupils' wider cultural understanding. ♦

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision and outcomes for children are good. Supportive links with parents and carers and shared activities with the adjacent pre-school help children to make a positive start to school. ♦ Children's skills on entry generally reflect those found nationally, but communication and emotional needs are lower on occasion. Children in their Reception Year benefit from close adult support, behave exceptionally well and make good progress across all the required areas of learning. Children enjoy school and do particularly well in extending their speaking and listening and social skills. The leaders support other staff well and by planning together they ensure that effective leadership and management underpin good teaching and learning and safeguard children's welfare. By developing learning through the same stories, for example, 'The Stickman', teachers make sure that all children build well on previous learning and develop their skills systematically. Children

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experience a well-balanced range of adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves, both indoors and outside. However, at times, adults do not spend enough time drawing new learning from the children's own choices and this constrains their independence.

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 was a better than average response to the questionnaire by parents and carers. The very large majority of the responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were positive. For example, amongst others, most parents and carers expressed agreement, additionally in writing, that they were happy with the school, that the school helped them to support their child's learning and kept their children safe. A small minority of parents and carers indicated disagreement with some of the statements in the questionnaire and also explained their views in writing. Most of the issues raised were associated with concerns about how the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour, and about pupils' progress and the leadership and management of the school. A few parents and carers were interviewed informally in the playground and, while generally supporting the school, also reflected the concerns expressed in the questionnaires. Inspectors understand the parents' and carers' rightful concerns about their children's progress, especially in previous years. The school readily acknowledges that, because of instability in staffing, the consistency of provision and pupils' progress slipped for some time following the previous inspection. Inspectors now identify satisfactory and improving progress. Committed staff seek to make pupils' progress even better. The findings of the inspection also show that in response to the school's effective procedures, pupils' behaviour is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lifton Community Primary 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	30	41	61	5	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	40	36	54	3	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	37	38	57	2	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	36	32	48	10	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	48	31	46	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	33	43	64	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	31	40	60	4	6	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)	15	22	43	64	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	30	40	60	6	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	15	42	63	12	18	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	28	38	57	5	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	22	40	60	6	9	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	42	34	51	4	6	1	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 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.



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lifton Community Primary School, Lifton PL16 OEH

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school this week. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about your work, and were impressed by the polite way you answered our questions, and by your good behaviour in class and around the school. We think that your school is a satisfactory school and we agree with you that it is getting better. ♦

These are the other main things we found.

- The school is improving and this is helping you to make satisfactory progress.
- By the end of Year 6, most of you reach the levels that we expect in your subjects.
- Those of you in Reception and Years 1 and 2 do well because of the consistently good teaching and support you receive.
- You enjoy school, have lots of friends and are good at living healthily.
- The staff take good care of you and keep you safe.
- Staff and governors promote good links with your parents and carers and the local community. They are improving the way they work together to help you to do even better.

To help you make better progress in your work, we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do two main things.

- Improve your progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in writing and number work, by encouraging some of you to expect more of yourselves.
- Make sure that there are even more good lessons in Years 3 to 6, and give you more opportunities to take responsibility for your own learning and to choose some activities for yourselves.

When the teachers mark your work and give you something to think about and improve, all of you can help by making sure that you follow their guidance on how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead Inspector

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