

Long Melford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124707
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359753
Inspection dates	31 January 2011–1 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Beck

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Aldhouse
Headteacher	Sandra Hoskin
Date of previous school inspection	14 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Six teachers were seen teaching 12 lessons. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at documentation including the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the report from the School Improvement Partner and records of previous lesson observations. In addition, inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and records of their progress and attendance. The response to 69 parental questionnaires was taken into account.

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

- The team investigated the effectiveness of the school's use of assessment, especially in lessons, to sustain above-average standards and good progress.
- Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection, especially with regard to outdoor play, were checked.
- Inspectors analysed the ways in which the leaders and managers are preparing for the forthcoming changes to the school.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. The majority of pupils come from the immediate locality, surrounding villages and nearby town of Sudbury. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. A very small number come from minority ethnic groups and, of these, few speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils on roll is rising. The school is due to expand to include Years 5 and 6 by September 2013. Currently, there are three intakes a year into the Nursery and Reception class, but this is changing to one in September 2011. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, as well as the proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below that found in most schools nationally. Pupils' special educational needs relate to autism, behaviour, speech and language and moderate learning difficulties. There is a new, privately owned breakfast club on site. It was not inspected as part of this inspection.

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

Long Melford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary is a good school. It promotes strongly pupils' confidence in learning through a culture of personal empowerment that they refer to as 'I can do it'. An inspiring curriculum enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills that link knowledge and understanding across different subjects, and personal qualities that will serve them well in education and in their future lives. Older pupils, in particular, are highly aspirational and have excellent skills in questioning, working collaboratively and solving problems.

Consistently good and, in some instances, outstanding teaching has enabled pupils to reach above-average standards in Year 2 and Year 4 over the past three years. Above-average attendance rates, pupils' good behaviour and really positive attitudes contribute much to their achievement and enjoyment of learning. Pupils' consideration and respect for each other allow teachers to listen to, observe, and question groups of pupils during lessons in order to redirect tasks and offer explanations to improve learning.

Consequently, teachers match work well to individuals' needs so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Teaching assistants provide good support to these pupils individually or in groups, enabling them to think for themselves, use their initiative and do as well as they can.

In some classes, including Nursery and Reception, staff have worked to introduce better assessment systems. These are successful in boosting pupils' progress because they clearly identify what pupils can do, and show both pupils and staff what needs to be learnt next. However, this is not consistent across the school. Since the last inspection, provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been reviewed and significant changes made. Alterations have been made to the environment, allowing children to take part easily in a wider range of activities. These help children to make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. They also stimulate children's curiosity, develop their independence and help them to acquire early literacy and numeracy skills. However, planning does not include sufficient challenging opportunities for children to solve problems and continue the imaginative ideas developed indoors in their play outdoors.

The school's partnerships in promoting learning and well-being are outstanding. Advice provided by other professionals is implemented effectively. This means that targeted support, for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is having a significant impact on their behaviour, relationships, confidence and attitudes to learning. Parents, carers and children are rightly very confident that the school does all it can to safeguard them so pupils feel extremely safe.

The governing body, together with senior staff, has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and plans accordingly. The school is facing the demands of

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expansion in a carefully considered manner. Leaders have already outlined the steps they need to take and are fully aware of some of the difficult decisions before them.

Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage fully take into account the increased number entering Reception and Nursery in September 2011. Leaders and managers have clear plans to ensure that the strengths of the school are sustained as it grows and that building work does not have a negative impact on standards or the quality of current provision. Strong teamwork and robust evaluation of new initiatives, underpinned by the ambition and drive of all staff to do their best for the pupils, show that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the assessment strategies that are having a significant impact on pupils' progress so that they are used consistently throughout the school. This is to ensure that all pupils have a very good idea about what they are doing well and know the next step in their learning.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop the provision for outdoor learning by providing more well-planned, purposeful and challenging play activities that:
 - enhance children's skills in problem-solving
 - enable children to explore themes that offer continuity of learning indoors and outdoors and extend their imaginative ideas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range but, overall, is in line with that expected. Pupils make good progress from their varied starting points, not only in literacy and numeracy, but also in their personal qualities. By the time pupils reach Year 4, they have developed into mature, confident young people. They take on important responsibilities around the school or in the playground sensibly. For example, in a recent project to raise pupils' awareness of bullying, and what to do if they felt they were being bullied, Year 4 pupils led groups from across the whole age range. They collected ideas, writing them on large posters that are displayed around the school. Pupils shared their views with adults. This has contributed significantly to their strong sense of feeling safe and knowing ways to deal with difficult situations.

Pupils respond well to challenges put before them. For example, in a high quality lesson in mathematics, pupils were challenged to solve a series of problems drawing on their knowledge of how to add up numbers with anything from two to five digits. They gave the task their concerted effort, persevering, helping each other, and using the clues displayed around the room so they could also work independently.

In all classes, pupils work very well together in groups. They show enthusiasm for learning and take pride in doing their best. These qualities underpin good progress, and were observed particularly in a literacy lesson with Year 2. In small groups, pupils were trying to think of as many different interesting words as they could to describe and build up the picture of the lead character in a story. Initially, they all wrote their ideas on the same large sheet of paper, but then one child collected the ideas into a single sentence. For example, 'Bunny has big, furry, grey, enormous, shimmery, long and fine ears.' Pupils

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drew successfully on their previous experiences to think of the best words to describe the character, as well as use their knowledge of phonics to spell accurately.

Pupils know about healthy lifestyles, eat healthy snacks and participate well in sport in and out of school. They play an active and important role in the church and local community, and raise funds for those less well off than themselves. Pupils have good knowledge of the work of famous artists and enjoy expressing their ideas in a similar style. They have some knowledge of the importance of the rainforest, of Ethiopia, and other cultures through their religious education. Strong links have yet to be established to extend pupils' understanding of life in communities very different from their own.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
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?

Teachers are skilled at capturing pupils' enthusiasm for learning by using varied and interesting activities. These include investigations into the best kind of soap; asking pupils to decide the link between pictures of a wind tower, polar bear and industrial smoke; or thinking about a magic land to which a flying blanket might transport them. Good opportunities for discussion give pupils the chance to think through their ideas with others before writing them down. Teachers explain clearly to pupils the purpose of their learning, and what they are to do at the beginning of the lesson, but set them to work quickly. Teachers make the most of opportunities in lessons to illustrate high quality work, correct misconceptions and engage with individuals who need additional help. Pupils in the older

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classes have a good understanding of what they do well and the next step they must focus on. This is because pupils have recorded the information in a way they can easily understand. However, this has not yet been implemented across all classes.

Good cross-curricular links make learning relevant, meaningful and purposeful. Recent developments include explicit dialogue with pupils about how to be inquisitive, powerful and active learners who persevere and can ask questions to deepen their own understanding. This is inspiring pupils to make the most of the learning opportunities before them and enhance their personal development, not only in school, but in their lives outside. Good care ensures that pupils' pastoral needs and individual concerns are catered for well. Carefully targeted provision to help pupils overcome their difficulties in learning also stems from the good partnerships established with parents and carers as well as strong partnerships with other professionals.

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?

Staff and the governing body have worked together to well to ensure that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Their work is focused clearly on maintaining and raising standards, and they have secure plans in place to make sure that good progress continues into Years 5 and 6 when the school expands. Teamwork, the thorough objective evaluation of initiatives to support best practice, and strong leadership by the headteacher are key strengths in the success of the school. Staff respond well to suggested changes to their practice and these are monitored carefully for their impact on pupils' learning and experience of school.

The school is successful in providing equal opportunities and enabling all pupils to participate in what it has to offer. It is eliminating variations in achievement between different groups of pupils well. The school can provide key examples where it has sought advice from professional partners that has brought about significant improvements, especially in pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good. Many members have joined in the last year, but they are already using their expertise skilfully to challenge and support the school, to manage finance, monitor the quality of provision, and to seek the views of parents and carers. The governing body has successfully placed strong emphasis on safeguarding pupils. The focus on ensuring internet safety, the involvement of pupils in conducting risk assessments and exemplary working with key agencies are enabling pupils to feel exceptionally safe. This is particularly appreciated by the parents and carers.

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A good plan for community cohesion confirms that the school knows its local church and community settings well. Pupils learn about different countries and their cultures through the curriculum, and through the links the governing body has with Ethiopia. This is due to be expanded through new links with schools in different communities nationally and abroad.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management mean that changes to provision are bringing about improvements to children's progress. In 2010, not all children reached the nationally expected level across all the areas of learning by the end of Reception. Detailed analysis of the data shows that this represented good achievement in the light of children's starting points, especially in their personal, social, emotional development. The current children are on track to exceed many of the early learning goals in 2011 as a result of the changes that have been implemented. Good teaching that promotes children's independence, builds on their curiosity and interests, and develops early literacy skills sets a positive foundation for learning. Staff know the children's needs well and track their progress through effective observations of what they can do and what the next steps should be. These are recorded in books that demonstrate to parents and carers how well their children are progressing. Parents and carers have the opportunity to share these books with their children and contribute information that enables staff to plan activities according to their children's interests.

The outdoor environment is not as inspiring as that indoors. Staff are currently visiting other schools and settings to gain ideas to improve provision. Planning confirms that there are not enough opportunities to develop children's problem-solving skills or to develop creative ideas that take their learning from indoors to outdoors.

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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

The majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire say that their children enjoy school and are particularly pleased with the way the school keeps them safe. Written comments were mostly full of praise for the way the school has developed their children's confidence, provided a creative approach to the curriculum and encouraged children to continue their learning at home. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the number of children in Year 1, necessitating splitting the age group across two classes. The school is in discussion with the local authority on the number of children to be admitted in each year group in future. In addition, a number of parents and carers were concerned about the lack of guidance received at the time of transfer to the middle school or to a new class. This matter is being reviewed by the school. Individual issues raised by parents and carers were brought to the attention of the headteacher and were taken into account during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Long Melford Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 165 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	71	19	28	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	61	27	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	54	26	38	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	58	26	38	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	67	23	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	57	26	38	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	51	33	48	1	1	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)	30	43	31	45	2	3	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	48	33	48	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	41	31	45	5	7	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	41	34	49	5	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	36	52	28	41	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	61	24	35	3	4	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 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	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).

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">■ 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.



2 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Long Melford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Sudbury, CO10 9ED

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed listening to your views. You told us that you go to a good school, that you are proud of it and that you feel really safe.

Your school provides a good education. We are not surprised that you enjoy coming to school and do not often miss a day because you have lots of fun things to do. We wished we had been able to take part in your investigation to find the best soap, and to think about taking a trip on a magic blanket. Your good behaviour and respect for one another mean your teachers and teaching assistants can help you quickly when you get stuck. You are good at working in groups, sharing your ideas or helping each other. You persevere when you find things difficult, but you ask good questions to understand what you need to do. These skills will help you all the time you are at school and when you go to work.

Your teachers are skilled at working with other people too. When they want to make things better for you they work with other schools or people who can give them good advice about caring for you. At the moment they are trying to find the best ways to help you to appreciate what you can do, and what you need to do to do even better. The teachers in the Reception and Nursery classes are visiting other schools to see how they can make the outside play area more attractive.

To help your school become even better I have asked the grown-ups to ensure that:

- you all know what you do well, and the next step you need to take to improve your work
- children in Reception and Nursery have more opportunities to solve problems and be imaginative in their play indoors and outdoors.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck

Lead inspector

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