

Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118637
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358407
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Murdoch
Headteacher	Linda Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons and four teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 38 parents and carers 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.

- How effectively the school promotes better attendance.
- Whether teaching is challenging enough to ensure that all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.
- How effectively leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate the capacity for sustained improvement.
- How well pupils develop independence and responsibility in their learning.

Information about the school

Laddingford is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The next largest group of pupils are from Traveller backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Their needs relate mainly to specific learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable disruption to staffing and particularly to the leadership of the school. The school had an advisory headteacher from January to July 2010. In July 2010, the school formed a soft federation with a local school whose headteacher led Laddingford for two days a week. Laddingford's senior teacher led the school for the other three days. The soft federation dissolved in December 2010 and the new substantive headteacher took up her post in January 2011. At the time of the inspection, the four class teachers were on temporary, fixed term contracts or supply cover. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Artsmark Gold awards and has Eco-school status.

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

Notable strengths of this small school are the caring Christian family ethos and the way in which pupils of all ages get on together. One parent wrote, 'We are constantly amazed at how the children interact so positively with each other between the year groups, with the older children looking after and supporting the younger ones. We think this is something very rare and very special.' Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy, as recognised by a Healthy Schools award. The school provides good care, guidance and support and looks after pupils well. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure.

Attainment is average, and achievement and outcomes for pupils are satisfactory. Children make a sound start to their schooling in the Early Years Foundation Stage but have too few opportunities to initiate their own learning to further develop independence, curiosity and imagination. In the 2010 Year 6 national test results, there was considerable improvement from the previous three years, most notably in English, where many pupils made good progress in writing from below average starting points. However, writing remains an area to improve. Pupils enjoy writing and some interesting and imaginative examples are displayed around the school. However, across the school, the presentation of pupils' work is often untidy. Work is sometimes not completed when they either do not have enough time to finish or expectations about the amount of writing they can produce are not challenging enough. There are too few opportunities offered to pupils to see effective models of writing to ensure the quality of their work is consistently good.

Pupils are generally interested in their work and want to do well. Teachers' planning includes clear learning intentions and success criteria, which are shared with pupils so that they know the purpose of their lessons and their targets for learning. However, teachers' expectations for progress and behaviour in lessons are not always high enough and this can slow the pace of learning. On occasion, work is not always well matched to pupils' differing abilities and, in particular, lacks challenge for more-able pupils. The headteacher has identified that a wider use of effective assessment information is required and has introduced a new tracking system to support this.

Attendance has been low but has improved very recently to broadly average because of the concerted efforts of leaders to reduce unauthorised absence. Pupils are keen to be awarded new certificates that celebrate 100% attendance and are healthily competitive to be the class with the best weekly score. Parents and carers are now informed in weekly newsletters of the attendance rates. However, a small number of families take children out of school during term time, with the result that they miss out on important learning.

There is a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The new headteacher has demonstrated her effectiveness in a very short space of time. With good support from the senior teacher, she has built on the developments made under the soft federation. She has very rapidly, through effective monitoring and rigorous self-evaluation, accurately

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identified further areas to improve and is taking effective action, especially to improve teaching and learning.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - raising expectations for the rate of pupils' progress to ensure that there is appropriate challenge, particularly for more-able pupils, and a good pace to learning in all lessons.
 - using assessment data more effectively to more precisely match work to pupils' needs.
 - setting higher expectations for behaviour to enable more effective learning.
- Raise achievement in writing across the school by:
 - improving pupils' presentation skills in their work
 - increasing expectations of the amount of work pupils are capable of doing
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to experience good models of writing to improve the quality of their work.
- Work with pupils, parents and carers and outside agencies to ensure that attendance remains consistently at least average.
- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing more opportunities for children to develop their independence, curiosity and imagination across all areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children start school with levels of attainment that are broadly as expected for their age. Learning, progress and achievement are satisfactory. Pupils do better in English than they do in mathematics, where their less-well developed investigative skills have held them back. Independent learning skills, taking responsibility for their own learning and a willingness to help each other all help pupils enjoy their learning. For example, one pupil expressed the views of many and said, 'We enjoy learning best when we get to do things ourselves, like in the science lesson on circuits.' Pupils were inspired and motivated by the events of the Book Week that was taking place during the inspection. They enjoyed dressing as their favourite book characters and this stimulated their writing. For example, pupils enjoyed writing play scripts and humorous stories based on the characters they represented. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 thoroughly enjoyed reading and sharing books with the Reception children as part of the Book Week activities. One pupil said, 'I really enjoyed it and asked them to tell me if I'd missed out any words.' During a lunch break, a Year 6 boy, without any prompting from adults, enthralled four younger children with his excellent storytelling skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others because their needs are identified at an early stage and targeted support is provided from teachers and teaching assistants, who often work with individuals or small groups to support learning effectively.

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Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given and take them seriously, for example as house captains, head boy and girl, and school council members. They take part in many fund-raising events for a range of charities and causes and this helps them develop an understanding of people who are in need. The work the school has done to gain the Eco school award means that pupils understand issues that affect society as a whole, such as recycling and saving electricity. Behaviour is satisfactory. Teachers do not always give clear messages to pupils about their expectations for behaviour, for example by ensuring that all pupils are focused and attentive at the start of lessons. The school's inclusive Christian ethos makes a significant contribution to the way pupils respect, understand and embrace the different backgrounds and cultures represented in the school. As a result, pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. This was seen in the way many pupils spoke about a recent Cultural Awareness Day where they and their parents and carers learned about the culture of the Traveller community through dance, stories, art, craft and cooking. There is some impressive artwork displayed around the school as a result of the work the school has done to gain the Artsmark Gold award.

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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Good marking and feedback that give pupils clear pointers to improve their work were evident, particularly in writing in Years 3 to 6. Pupils also have good opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own learning and progress. However, these aspects are

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inconsistent across the school. There are some good enrichment activities, through special events, clubs and visitors to school, that enhance the otherwise satisfactory curriculum and extend pupils' experiences. Opportunities are sometimes missed to enliven learning by connecting subjects in a purposeful and meaningful way. Pupils do not have enough chances to apply their skills to a range of subjects, for example using information and communication technology skills to support English and mathematics work. Good links with other agencies and well-targeted support ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable integrate well and make similar progress to others relative to their starting points. Transition procedures into school, through the classes and into Year 7 are good and ensure effective levels of support for pupils and their families. The parent of one child who had joined the school in Key Stage 2 commented, 'My child has settled in very happily to his class due to the kindness and pastoral care shown by teaching staff and classmates alike.' Pupils' welfare is very effectively monitored through the use of individual pastoral care folders.

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?

Leaders, including members of the governing body, share the headteacher's drive and ambition for the school and, although it is too soon to see the full impact on outcomes for pupils, significant improvements have already been made. Safeguarding procedures have been fine-tuned and are more robust. Policies and procedures are clear and well known by all staff. A new tracking system has been introduced and weekly newsletters are now sent out to parents and carers. Leaders promote equal opportunities satisfactorily and the inclusive ethos of the school ensures that pupils learn and develop without fear of discrimination. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It has supported the school well through the numerous changes since the last inspection, particularly in keeping parents and carers on board and well informed about the changes. The school benefits from the expertise of governing body members, particularly in the area of financial management. It has recently been restructured and is developing more rigour in monitoring the impact of the school's work.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. One parent wrote, 'Even though the school has gone through a lot of changes over the last couple of years, the new head and all the staff have shown outstanding commitment to the children's learning and the school is always a welcoming and happy environment.' Partnerships with local schools, particularly the ongoing link with the previously federated school, effectively support staff through sharing good practice and professional development opportunities. Leaders have developed the school as a cohesive community in which pupils show tolerance, respect

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and understanding for others. There are good links with the local community and the local church. The school has been particularly successful in engaging with the Traveller community. Pupils learn about other countries, cultures and faiths through the curriculum. A parent of a child from a minority ethnic group commented, 'We feel that at Laddingford every child does matter. Everyone has gone out of their way to include my child's culture in the class learning.' The school has identified the need for further development of pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society beyond the school.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress and reach the goals for their learning by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They clearly enjoy being at school and settle well in a happy, caring environment. One parent wrote, 'My child has settled in brilliantly. He loves all the teachers and the children.' There are good induction procedures, enabling good links with parents and carers and a smooth transition into school life. Children understand the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand why they wash their hands before lunch; one child said, 'So the water makes them clean for us to eat with and no germs.' Close attention is paid to children's welfare and there are good and trusting relationships between children and staff that ensure children feel safe and secure at all times. Staff know the children well, and the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well so that they make similar progress to others.

Children are satisfactorily encouraged to develop confidence and independence, particularly when engaged in self-chosen activities. However, there are too few opportunities for these activities and they are not always offered alongside the activities directed by adults to enable skills to develop further and teaching to focus more specifically on individual learning needs. Sometimes adults intervene too quickly and too

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frequently, so that activities planned for children to make their own choices are overly directed by adults. This slows children's progress.

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

An above-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of these, all agree that the school keeps their children safe and encourages them to lead a healthy lifestyle and almost all agree that children enjoy coming to school and that they are happy with their children's experiences at school. The main concern from a small minority of parents and carers was about how well the school informs them of children's progress. The new headteacher has already correctly identified this as an area to develop and plans are well under way to provide more information more frequently. A few feel that their children are not making enough progress. Inspectors agree that although pupils make satisfactory progress, more could be making better progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Laddingford St Mary's 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	74	9	24	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	66	13	34	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	45	12	32	8	21	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	55	11	29	3	8	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	27	71	7	18	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	50	14	37	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	63	14	37	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	53	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	55	12	32	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	53	11	29	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	63	9	24	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	61	13	34	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	71	10	26	0	0	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	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.



18 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Maidstone ME18 6BL

You may remember that two inspectors came to your school recently. I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. We agree with you and your parents and carers that Laddingford is a safe and happy place to be and all the adults in school care for you well. Your school is satisfactory overall. This means that some things are good and some things need to be better. Your new headteacher is doing a good job to improve the school even more. We were very pleased to see how well all age groups get on together and particularly how the older children look after the younger ones. We were also impressed by how much you all know about the culture of the children who come from the Traveller community and how much you enjoyed the 'Cultural Awareness Day'. Well done for trying so hard to be fit and healthy and for coming to school more regularly, although for some of you this needs to be even better. We have asked the adults in your school to do the following important things.

- Make sure all your lessons help you learn and make progress more quickly and that teachers keep a very close check on how each one of you is learning so that they can plan work that is just right for you, particularly for those of you who find learning easy.
- Teachers should let you know in every lesson how they expect you to behave to make sure you can learn as well as possible.
- Improve your writing by making sure it is always well presented so that people can enjoy reading it more easily, and that you get more writing done in your lessons.
- Teachers should make sure you see how they and other writers write to help your writing to be better.
- Improve attendance even more so that some of you do not miss out on important learning.
- Make sure children in the Reception class get lots of opportunities to choose what they do so they become independent, curious and imaginative learners.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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