

Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118343
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358321
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jon Carter

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Swainson
Headteacher	Mary Haney
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons taught by five teachers. Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher and head of school, a group of teachers, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans and many other documents.

Inspectors analysed the responses from the 64 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from 63 pupils and 16 staff.

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

- How effectively leaders and managers are improving teaching and learning to ensure that pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- The extent to which the personalisation of the curriculum is leading to improved learning and progress, especially for gifted and talented pupils.
- The extent to which partnerships with other schools, especially the federation, are promoting improved outcomes for pupils through effective leadership and management.
- The extent to which the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage develops children's literacy skills, particularly in writing.

Information about the school

Lynsted and Norton is a smaller-than-average primary school, with a Reception class and four mixed-aged classes covering Years 1 to 6. It is part of a federation with two other village primary schools. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are fewer pupils from other minority ethnic groups, such as Gypsy Roma families, than at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has almost doubled in the past year and is now just above the national average. An average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these, the largest groups experience moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a privately run pre-school on the site which shares outdoor resources with the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The pre-school was not included as part of this inspection. The school holds the Healthy School award.

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

Lynsted and Norton is a good school. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school, particularly about the way in which it provides good care for pupils and helps them to make good progress. One parent described the school accurately when they wrote: 'The school provides a very warm and caring environment for my children to learn in. They are progressing well both academically and socially.'

Overall, pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Attainment matches national averages but, as lesson observations confirm, pupils' learning and development are often stronger in mathematics than in English. This is mainly due to a recent and effective focus on improving the quality of mathematics teaching. There has been extensive support from the federation in achieving this improvement. Teaching, which is usually good, promotes good learning in lessons. Marking and assessment are thorough and are used effectively to plan for the next stages in pupils' learning. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve because teachers' written feedback is developmental. However, there is some inconsistency in ensuring that pupils are given time to respond to teachers' comments, particularly for tasks involving writing.

Pupils' personal development is good. They play a strong part in their local community and have a broad understanding of what life is like in more diverse areas of the United Kingdom. However, their knowledge of how different cultures influence the way people live in other countries is less strong because strategies for enabling them to be actively involved in linking with children from other countries are at an early stage of development. Pupils with medical conditions receive excellent levels of support. While the attendance of these pupils is sometimes severely restricted by their health, many others have high rates of attendance. Overall, attendance is average and improving strongly.

School leaders monitor the quality of learning and teaching regularly and evaluate pupils' progress accurately. Their self-evaluation processes are reflective and thorough. Consequently, senior staff have a good understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. As a result, there is a good capacity to ensure it does. Actions taken to address issues, affecting pupils' progress in writing for example, have been prompt, robust and effective. Members of the governing body have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but their understanding of how well pupils are making progress is too broad and general. For this reason, the support and challenge they provide to school leaders lacks rigour and is therefore only satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing, to the levels seen in mathematics, by ensuring pupils have sufficient time to respond to the guidance they receive on how to improve.
- Promote improved cultural understanding and develop further community cohesion by enabling pupils to develop meaningful and active links with others in more diverse areas of the world.
- Improve the rigour with which the governing body makes use of information about pupils' learning and progress to support and challenge school leaders more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress in lessons and very much enjoy the variety of activities offered. In an English lesson for Years 2 and 3, for example, pupils prepared for a piece of creative writing by designing a map for an adventure story and shared their developing ideas with the class. This engaged them in an exciting task and promoted their speaking and listening skills well. Pupils' progress in mathematics is accelerating following the development of a more structured approach to teaching basic calculation skills. The use of this system has enabled pupils to successfully learn and use a wider range of strategies for solving number problems.

Gifted and talented pupils benefit from a broad range of additional experiences, many of which are developed in conjunction with the Federation, such as the successful writers' workshop. Consequently, their progress is almost always good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at rates similar to the other pupils in their classes due to the good support they receive from teaching assistants in class and in small groups. Pupils from Gypsy Roma families make slightly better progress in writing and mathematics than other pupils in the school as they make up lost ground. There is little significant difference between how well boys make progress compared to girls across the school, although there is some variation as to which group does slightly better in individual year groups.

Pupils demonstrate their good adoption of healthy lifestyles through their enthusiastic participation in physical education lessons and a range of active sports during lunchtime and after school, including the 'Bikeability' programme. An increasing number of pupils eat a school meal at lunchtime and the school council runs a weekly healthy tuck shop, reflecting the school's Healthy School status.

Behaviour in class and around the school is good and the attendance of most pupils is regular. While pupils feel safe and well looked after, they perceive that there is a small amount of bullying. However, they say any issues are acted upon quickly by staff. Pupils' social and moral development is generally satisfactory. They demonstrate this, for example, through the friendly and appropriate relationships they have with each other and with the adults in their school. However, their spiritual and cultural development is less well established.

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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	3
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	2
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	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?

The good curriculum is appropriately planned to meet the needs of all pupils within the school's mixed-age-group classes. The flexible organisation of lessons ensures that good account is taken of pupils' current levels of knowledge and understanding. Where appropriate, pupils will move groups to ensure that they access the most appropriate teaching for their ability. In Years 4 to 6, this also supports good development of independence as pupils prepare to make the transition to secondary school. English and mathematics are taught by subject specialists throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Consequently, there is improved consistency in the delivery of these subjects, particularly mathematics, because teachers can dedicate more time to shared planning and professional development with colleagues from other schools in the federation.

Good links between subjects ensure pupils have opportunities to apply their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, preparing them effectively for the next stage of their education. A good variety of clubs and activities enhance the curriculum further and a majority of pupils attend at least one. Pupils with particular gifts or talents are well supported by enrichment activities at local secondary schools and projects with organisations such as the Royal Opera House. The learning environment is vibrant and welcoming with colourful displays of pupils' work celebrating their achievements.

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Pupils are very well cared for and looked after, particularly vulnerable pupils who receive highly personalised and effective help with their medical, learning or emotional needs. The school works effectively with external agencies to ensure pupils are protected from harm. It provides valuable additional support to individuals experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties to maintain a fully inclusive ethos without needing to regularly resort to exclusion. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance make appropriate use of external support and are being successful in reducing absence from school.

In most lessons, good teaching ensures learning activities are well matched to pupils' current knowledge and skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and strengths are utilised well. In a German lesson for Years 5 and 6, for example, both the teacher and teaching assistant modelled the language well. They promoted pupils' enthusiastic participation by taking good account of a range of learning styles. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive focused support from adults which promotes their progress well. More-able pupils are appropriately challenged and extended. Teachers manage their classrooms and pupils' behaviour well and make good use of learning space both inside and outside the buildings. Pupils' work is usually assessed regularly and thoroughly. Marking identifies strengths and weaknesses clearly. Feedback to pupils often includes useful commentary and prompts. However, expectations that pupils will respond to feedback are not followed up consistently, losing some valuable opportunities to ensure that marking has an impact on learning and progress.

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 staff team shares a common vision for the future of the school. Collaborative working is well established within the school and is developing strongly as part of the federation. This is particularly noticeable from the recent improvements in progress in mathematics. All staff contribute to planning for future school improvement under the effective and focused leadership of the executive headteacher and the head of school. Teaching quality is routinely monitored and evaluated. Where necessary, swift action is taken to support staff and secure a return to good learning and progress for pupils.

Members of the governing body have a satisfactory overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their experience to ensure leaders are supported and challenged. There are effective routes for information to flow between the governing body and parents and carers. However, the quality of learning, progress and teaching in the school is understood at a level which is too general to ensure that rigorous challenge can be provided to school leaders to ensure outcomes for pupils are as good as they can be.

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Safeguarding arrangements are good. Policies and procedures are in place and reviewed appropriately. Risk assessment systems are well developed. Constructive links with outside agencies ensure suitable support is given to pupils and families in need. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and makes sure there is no discrimination of any of its community. The school routinely tracks and monitors the progress of vulnerable children. Staff's good knowledge of pupils' individual needs ensure that those, for example, who are known to be eligible for free school meals, receive good support and learn and develop at least as fast as their peers. Partnerships with outside agencies are effective in helping families experiencing difficulties to get support so that any impact on pupils' learning is minimised. The school promotes equality and seeks to eliminate any discrimination effectively, resulting in few racist incidents.

The school has a sound understanding of the social, ethnic and religious diversity of the area it serves. Pupils' development of tolerance and understanding of life in communities other than their own is satisfactory. Consequently, the school's contribution to the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Parents and carers have access to a wide range of opportunities to communicate with the school, both electronically and face to face. They are consulted effectively about proposed changes and have opportunities to become more involved in their children's learning, through the online virtual learning environment, for example.

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	3
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

Children start in the Reception class with levels of development which are broadly in line with age-related expectations. Teaching makes good use of individual assessment information to identify where they could make better progress. As a result, through enjoyable and engaging activities, children make good progress in almost all areas of their

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learning but particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills. An effective daily phonics programme builds children's understanding of the sounds letters make well. This has consequently had a positive impact on their writing skills and a greater proportion of children now enter Key Stage 1 having reached a good level of development in this area.

Good use is made of available resources both indoors and outside. Staff interact well with the children and assess their progress very effectively through observation and questioning. This enables them to successfully devise exciting activities that suit children's needs and interests and move their learning on swiftly. Themes, such as 'The Aquanauts', cover all areas of learning well. For example, children enthusiastically recreate stories through small world water play while staff reinforce their number skills. However, while procedures for assessing and recording the progress made by individual children are strong, systems for monitoring the progress made by the class across different areas of learning are less well established.

Leaders responsible for the provision ensure that children's welfare and learning needs are met well. Very effective transition arrangements ensure that children settle in quickly. Most children transfer from the privately run, on-site pre-school and are already familiar with the shared outdoor learning area and know some of the school staff. Children from other nursery provision benefit from home visits and well-planned induction sessions. While the class teacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the setting, there is no formal development plan in place to assist with monitoring the effectiveness of actions taken.

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

A higher-than-average number of questionnaires were received from parents and carers. While a very large majority of parents and carers gave positive responses, a few disagreed that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence would not appear to support this view as pupils' behaviour was well managed. However, school leaders identified that concerns may be associated with issues about particular individuals, which have been successfully resolved by prompt management action.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lynsted and Norton 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	58	24	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	58	25	39	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	45	30	47	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	50	29	45	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	55	27	42	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	52	28	44	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	50	28	44	2	3	1	2
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)	26	41	26	41	3	5	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	53	26	41	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	38	32	50	3	5	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	42	30	47	4	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	36	56	25	39	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	61	22	34	3	5	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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lynsted and Norton Primary School, Sittingbourne, ME9 0RL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were pleased to be able to speak with you about your school and watch some of your lessons.

I am writing to tell you that you go to a good school. You make good progress in lessons and enjoy learning. You told us through the questionnaire that you feel safe, and that adults care about you and help you at school. Many of you disagreed that behaviour at your school is good. We saw almost everyone behaving very well, in lessons and at playtime. We think that you should be proud of your good behaviour ♦ well done! We also understand that your school helps children who sometimes find behaving well very hard and this may be a reason why you think behaviour is not always good.

Your school helps to make sure you are always learning at the speed which is right for you. Your teachers assess your work well, although sometimes you need some extra time to follow up their feedback in your books. They give you interesting activities to do, especially in the Reception class. It is good that so many of you get to work with others to develop your gifts and talents further.

To help make your experience at school even better, we have asked the teachers who lead your school to concentrate on the following things.

- Improve the quality of writing by giving you time to respond to teachers' feedback.
- Make sure you get opportunities to link up with children in other parts of the world to learn more about what it is like to live in their country and culture.
- Help the governing body to be more effective at supporting and challenging the teachers who lead your school.

You can all help by responding to your teachers' feedback when they give you an extra task to complete.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector

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