

Larkwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134178
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	381628
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	725
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Smith
Headteacher	Lynne Harrowell
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They visited 29 lessons, observing 23 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and school improvement plans. Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from 206 parents and carers, 110 pupils and 22 staff.

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

- How effective is the teaching of mathematics?
- How successful are actions to raise the achievement of boys?
- How effectively do teachers use assessment information to meet the needs of all pupils, and help them to identify how to improve their work and meet their targets?
- Do pupils have sufficient planned opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) in different subjects to support and enhance their learning?

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have increased since the last inspection in this larger than average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion speaking English as an additional language has risen to a level slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has also increased in recent years to a broadly average level. More than a quarter of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, a figure which is above average. Their needs are mostly associated with difficulties related to speech, language and communication or to literacy. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery, and this year, in four Reception classes. The school has recently received the Sustainable Travel award. A new headteacher has been in post since the start of the new school year. There have been three headteachers under temporary arrangements since the last inspection following the prolonged absence of the previous headteacher. The school runs a breakfast club and hosts a private after school club, which is inspected separately.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

- Pupils are not making sufficient progress. Attainment is broadly average and falling. A significant minority of pupils, particularly boys, are not reaching the levels expected of them by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. As such, they are not appropriately prepared for future success.
- While there is some good teaching that engages and interests the pupils, there is too much that is satisfactory and a significant amount that is inadequate. Teachers do not make consistently effective use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of all pupils. Furthermore, many are not confident in teaching mathematics.
- The youngest children make a good start in the Nursery, but this is not built on effectively in the Reception classes. Shortcomings in teaching and children's learning are not being tackled effectively. This is particularly so around the need to improve children's numeracy skills and the sharing of good practice more effectively so that learning flows freely between inside and outdoors.
- The curriculum is not contributing consistently well to the pupils' achievement. Early reading schemes are not systematic and pupils have too few opportunities to develop and apply their writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across subjects.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate because of the school's lack of suitable structures to monitor the progress of pupils. School leaders have not been able to identify until too late where pupils or groups are falling behind so that suitable action can be taken. This issue has been addressed by the new headteacher, but it is too early to see evidence of the impact of actions taken.
- Through their marking, teachers indicate what pupils have done well and how to do better. However, they do not always give them time to respond to their comments and so improve their work in order to meet their targets.
- The school is focused on supporting potentially vulnerable pupils and their families through its understanding of their circumstances and the use of external agencies to provide additional expertise. In addition, the school is a reasonably harmonious environment which is a measure of its success in

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tackling discrimination.

Leadership and management have not been effective until recently in tackling any shortcomings as they have emerged in order to drive the school forward. Instability in leadership has slowed improvement and several areas of the school's work have declined in recent years. The lack of detailed tracking and assessment data has limited the accuracy of self-evaluation and the identification of key priorities for improvement so that action can be taken, for example, when pupils fall behind their targets. This means the school has an inadequate capacity for further improvement. However, the new headteacher has made a very positive start. She has identified precisely what needs to be done to improve the school and has put structures and actions in place to put it on the road to recovery. She recognises that much greater rigour and consistency are needed in many areas but particularly in promoting more effective learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate progress by:
 - developing staff expertise in teaching mathematics
 - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of all pupils
 - planning opportunities for pupils to reflect on and respond to their teachers' marking and other feedback
 - ensuring that support staff are deployed to maximise learning throughout each lesson.

- Develop the curriculum so that pupils improve their key skills by:
 - providing more interesting and engaging contexts to stimulate writing in different subjects, especially for boys
 - strengthening the pupils' use of ICT to support and extend their learning across subjects
 - implementing a consistent approach to the development of reading skills.

- Accelerate the children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in numeracy in particular by:
 - improving the provision and teaching in the Reception classes
 - matching activities to the children's needs and interests
 - sharing good practice more effectively so that learning flows freely between inside and outdoors
 - ensuring that planned actions are carried out rigorously and consistently.

- Make more effective use of assessment information and other data in order to:
 - identify and take action when pupils are falling behind their targets
 - monitor the achievement of groups of pupils and take action when gaps emerge with national expectations

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- evaluate the school’s performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Children enter the Nursery with skills which are below those expected for their age. The quality of learning varies considerably. When at its most effective, such as when Year 6 pupils undertook problem-solving tasks in mathematics with work pitched closely to meet their individual needs, they work with interest and determination. They benefit greatly from working together and discussing their ideas. Pupils rise to the challenges presented, but lose interest when teachers talk too much and do not encourage them to take an active role in their learning. Then pupils do not make the gains in acquiring the skills needed for them to reach expected levels. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with speech, language and communication difficulties, learning is inconsistent and inadequate overall as they are often given activities not directly based on their identified needs.

Test results for Year 6 pupils were broadly average in 2011. However, they were lower for boys, those known to be eligible for free school meals and some pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These groups all made inadequate progress.

Pupils generally report feeling safe in school and are confident that their concerns will be dealt with constructively. Some are concerned about poor behaviour but older pupils say that behaviour is improving because of the actions of the new headteacher. Pupils reflect sensitively upon their own and others’ beliefs and values. They can articulate their views on what is right and wrong not only in relation to school circumstances but also when discussing topical events. Pupils understand the need to take regular exercise and to eat and drink sensibly. The fruit tuck shop is a very popular snack venue at morning break and sports clubs are well-attended. Pupils have a voice in decision making through their school council and undertake charity fund raising activities, but make a more limited contribution to the community locally.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils’ behaviour	3

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

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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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Not enough teaching moves the pupils' learning forward at the pace needed to reduce the gaps between their attainment and national expectations. There are some effective lessons which engage the pupils through well-planned and stimulating activities. However, even in these lessons, the level of challenge is not consistent, because planning does not build systematically upon pupils' prior understanding and experiences. Expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not high enough in some classrooms. Support staff are not always effectively deployed throughout each lesson. Assessment information is not used well to monitor the achievement of groups of pupils so action may result when gaps emerge with the progress expected.

Teachers focus on developing pupils' basic skills, but boys especially are not always stimulated by the opportunities provided to develop their writing. Adaptations to programmes extend the more-able pupils but are not sufficiently focused for those who have fallen behind their targets. Extra-curricular opportunities are rich, varied and much appreciated by the pupils. Sports clubs, in partnership with outside organisations and the expertise of coaches, contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and provide enrichment activities for talented pupils. Art and science weeks and an enterprise day give pupils of different ages the opportunity to work together and interact with experts.

The school provides a welcoming atmosphere which is particularly true in the breakfast club where the staff team are enthusiastic and positive about their roles. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well known to and well supported by staff. Pupils can express their concerns through 'worry boxes' but not all members of staff respond as quickly as they would like. Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for their move to secondary school, but other transition arrangements such as between Reception and Year 1 do not provide sufficient continuity in pupils' experiences.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	4

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relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Until recently, senior leaders had limited success in taking action aimed at moving the school forward. However, the new headteacher has rapidly established a clear direction and is starting to raise expectations of what the school can achieve. She has swiftly identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching and where improvement is needed, but actions taken have not had time to make an impact. Teachers are starting to be held more accountable for their performance and for the achievement of pupils in their classes through the increased rigour with which assessment data are interrogated to identify potential underachievement. However, the gap in attainment between boys and girls by Year 6 is not closing quickly enough because it has not been tackled with sufficient rigour. Consequently, the school’s promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate. There are indications that recent initiatives, such as enabling teachers to work alongside experts, are starting to bear fruit.

The new headteacher reports a good level of both challenge and support from the governing body. Governors do not shy away from asking difficult questions in holding senior leaders to account. The governing body has a reasonable understanding of the school’s qualities but in the past has not been sufficiently involved in the systematic evaluation of its performance. The governing body ensures that secure safeguarding procedures are in place including arrangements for checking and vetting staff. Effective training and induction arrangements for new staff ensure that procedures are rigorously implemented.

Partnerships with outside agencies, such as medical and family support services, make a positive contribution to the pupils’ well-being. Where the curriculum is stronger and achievement better it is the result of effective use of partner expertise in the classroom. The school undertakes a variety of activities to promote greater community cohesion including the link established with the local Turkish community. However, the impact of actions has not been fully evaluated so that further work can be planned. Increasingly, new technology is being used to keep parents and carers informed about school activities and workshops on numeracy and literacy have enabled them to see how they can support their children at home.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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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	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Nursery, in an environment both inside and outdoors that supports good quality learning through activities that engage their imaginations. Progress is inconsistent and inadequate overall across the four Reception classes. There is much variation between the classes because the expertise and good practice evident within the setting is not being utilised and shared to improve the provision.

Activities in most Reception classes are poorly matched to the children’s needs and interests. Children have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills and understanding or to use imagination. Too many children work with little purpose because they are not engaged by the activities presented and their learning is not promoted adequately by pertinent interventions from adults. The outdoor learning environment for Reception children does not provide effective learning experiences. Furthermore, adults are not deployed effectively to move learning forward. Learning does not flow smoothly between inside and outdoors in all classes as it does in the Nursery.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has identified that outcomes in calculating and shape, space and measures are very low. However, action taken to remedy this has not been concerted and consistent across all classes. In general, leadership has too little impact on the children’s progress and has not targeted resources sharply enough to bring about improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

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The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire is in line with the average for primary schools. However, the level of satisfaction is well below average in response to most questions. Many parents and carers have concerns about the partnership between home and school, and the impact leadership and management has had on provision and outcomes. While the inspection evidence provides insight into why this has happened, it also shows that the school has begun to address these matters seriously. The inspection evidence concurs with many of the concerns raised by parents and carers about their children's progress, the quality of teaching, how well individual needs are supported and whether they are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Larkwood 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 206 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 725 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	49	95	46	8	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	37	109	53	10	5	5	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	53	26	92	45	44	21	9	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	20	108	52	30	15	15	7
The teaching is good at this school	53	26	104	50	29	14	5	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	20	89	43	47	23	12	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	25	117	57	25	12	4	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)	34	17	104	50	22	11	12	6
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	21	105	51	31	15	11	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	19	83	40	39	19	22	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	17	99	48	34	17	18	9
The school is led and managed effectively	41	20	93	45	33	16	16	8
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	48	23	112	54	27	13	10	5

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



14 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkswood Primary School, London, E4 8ET

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently, and for telling us your views. We recognise that Larkswood does some things well but there are weaknesses in important areas that mean the school is not performing well enough. For this reason, we have decided that the school requires special measures; this means it needs help to improve.

Everyone is doing their utmost to keep you safe. Although the youngest children get off to a good start in the Nursery, some of the teaching in the rest of the school has not been good enough and this has led to you not making the progress of which you are capable. We have asked the governors and staff of the school to:

- help you to learn better by improving teaching, particularly in mathematics
- provide you with more interesting opportunities for learning, making sure that you do more writing and use computers more frequently in all subjects
- improve the younger children's learning experiences in Reception
- make better use of the assessments teachers undertake to spot if you are falling behind your targets so that they can provide activities to help you to catch up.

Inspectors will visit regularly to check the progress they are making. All of you can play your part in helping the school to improve by working hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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