

Lexden Primary School with Unit for Hearing Impaired Pupils

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114707
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	395364
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
Lead inspector	Richard Blackmore

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	232
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Ros Somerville
Headteacher	Carole Farrer
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2007
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	22–23 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore

Additional Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight teachers teaching 17 lessons. Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, including analyses of the pupils' work. In addition a number of documents were looked at, including those relating to development planning, safeguarding, the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and external views of the school. The inspector also analysed 86 questionnaires from parental and carers, and others from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and a very small minority speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The school does not meet the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected by the government for attainment and progress. There is a specially resourced provision for up to 21 pupils with special educational needs who have hearing impairments. The school provides a breakfast club each morning. During the last three years the number of pupils moving in and out of the school other than at the usual times is high.

Recent accreditations include Healthy Schools status and Eco-Schools award. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes in teaching staff and in September 2011 the senior management team was restructured to incorporate two assistant headteachers.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly appreciative of the highly inclusive approach and individual attention to pupils' needs. It is not good because the monitoring of teaching has not been effective enough to iron out inconsistencies and ensure that the quality of teaching, and thus pupils' achievement in key subjects, is better than satisfactory. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average and most pupils make satisfactory progress. The needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and of pupils with a statement of special educational needs are met well, so they make better progress. Progress in writing and mathematics is held back by limited opportunities for pupils to work by themselves or write in different subjects.
- Teachers use imaginative strategies and interesting resources to help pupils learn. They have established very good relationships with pupils. However, teachers do not always mark work effectively or encourage pupils to learn independently. Assessment information is not always used to match activities to pupils' different abilities, especially in mathematical problem-solving tasks.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils encourage good and sometimes outstanding behaviour, both around the school and in lessons. Even when teaching does not quite meet their needs, they are very cooperative and show considerable respect for each other. Pupils feel safe and enjoy school, as evidenced in their above-average attendance.
- Broadly accurate self-evaluation has informed strategies for bringing about change and a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. However, the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently focused on how teaching can be improved to raise standards and speed up progress. Consequently, the drive for

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improvement is not yet consistently effective across all leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012, improve the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that information on pupils' progress is used consistently well to plan and adapt learning so that all pupils are challenged to achieve their very best
 - providing more opportunities, especially for the more-able pupils, to develop independent learning skills.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in writing and mathematics by:
 - enabling pupils to develop their writing skills across the whole curriculum
 - providing more problem-solving opportunities, especially for the more-able pupils.
- By December 2012, develop the roles of the middle managers so that:
 - they are fully engaged in robust monitoring and evaluation
 - the impact of their work can be seen in improved provision and outcomes.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with basic skills that are lower than those typical for their age. They make good progress because of effective teaching in an environment that caters well for their needs. Children develop their language skills well, for example by describing the problems with a car that has gone to the 'Lexden Garage' for an 'MOT', pretending to be a mechanic answering questions posed by their classmates, and enjoying daily letter and sounds activities. *'They progress well in all areas of learning, and in 2011 a large majority of children entered Year 1 with expected skill levels'.*

Progress throughout the rest of the school is satisfactory overall. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with a statement of educational needs and some pupils from the hearing impaired provision make good progress because they have their learning clearly mapped out for them. Well-managed small-group support for developing basic skills and appropriately matched work in classrooms are daily features for these pupils. Attainment overall is rising again after a dip in 2011. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet floor standards this year and the previous gap in attainment between boys and girls is closing. Pupils' good, and sometimes exemplary, behaviour and attentiveness in lessons are major factors in their accelerating progress.

Pupils throughout the school reach higher levels in reading than in mathematics and

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writing. They find it hard to solve number problems confidently and are sometimes unsure of the correct method of calculation when investigating numbers because they have too few opportunities to independently practise these skills in real-life situations. There are times when pupils make very quick progress in literacy. For example, outstanding learning was observed in a literacy lesson focusing on complex sentence building when one pupil wrote, 'Feeling rather melancholy the old man lumbered wearily down the ancient street'. However, this quality is not consistent across the school because teachers do not make the most of writing opportunities in different subjects.

Attainment in reading is broadly average in Year 2 and Year 6, and is the strongest aspect of Year 2 pupils' performance. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have benefited from the attention paid to teaching reading systematically in all classes. Carefully chosen and high-quality reading books are successfully encouraging more pupils, particularly boys, to read for pleasure throughout the school. Parents and carers are confident that their children make good progress, but the inspection found that despite the clear strengths in some areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress is satisfactory overall.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers believe that teaching is good. Teaching is currently satisfactory but it is improving so more is becoming good or better. Leaders have made clear their expectations and the features that they expect to find in all lessons. As a result, for example, teachers use teaching assistants to work closely with groups of pupils to raise attainment during literacy and numeracy lessons. Pupils say they know their targets and receive feedback on how to improve. However, their workbooks show inconsistencies in marking; pupils' efforts are celebrated but they receive limited advice for improvement and are not always expected to act on it.

The teaching of hearing impaired pupils within the unit, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. High pupil/teacher ratios help to ensure that on some occasions the quality of teaching is good and the progress of pupils is quicker because of the close attention paid to their particular level of ability and individual need.

Lessons promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, resulting in the friendly, respectful relationships seen between pupils and staff. Pupils behave well and say they enjoy their lessons. One commented, 'Teachers make learning fun.' Where teaching is good or better, teachers' good subject knowledge and questioning ensure that lessons move along at a lively pace. Year 5 pupils were totally engaged in a very stimulating and lively literacy lesson. Pupils enthusiastically explored and accurately used a range of complex words such as 'intricate' and 'sophisticated'. Pupils included this new vocabulary precisely in their writing, demonstrating their ability to quickly use new and exciting words.

However, on too many other occasions work does not take full account of pupils'

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differing needs, so more-able pupils in particular do not have to make enough effort. Hence, progress slows. Teachers do not always notice when, for example, some pupils' work is incorrect or is being completed easily, particularly at the start of lessons. This means that they are unable to give extra help or move pupils on more quickly if they have learned faster than expected.

Literacy lessons and some mathematics lessons are planned thoroughly with a variety of different activities. In a lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were asked to count up to twenty-four. This challenged their thinking and was developed further by using the outside area to reinforce their understanding using large apparatus. Such stimulating approaches are not built consistently into lessons across the school, to ensure pupils make quick progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have very positive views of the school, including behaviour. They say that they feel safe and cared for, and their parents and carers agree. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet or on the roads, and this is well promoted through themed weeks such as Road Safety Week and talks by the police. Activities such as anti-bullying week ensure they are aware of different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying or racism. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. Pupils do not regard this as a problem, saying staff listen to them and act swiftly and effectively to deal with any rare incidents that occur. School records support this view.

Pupils typically behave well because it is expected of them, and they are polite and courteous towards adults. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very positive although one or two pupils sometimes do not fully engage in lessons. They show respect during assemblies and are well mannered at the table during lunchtime. Strategies for managing behaviour and dealing with the very few incidents of bullying are robust and consistent. Procedures to promote regular attendance and punctuality are effective, so attendance is above the national average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is low.

Leadership and management

The effective headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body present a united front in their shared determination to move the school forward after academic results in 2011 were lower than had been typical in previous years. Their self-evaluation feeds into comprehensive plans for improvement that have recently proved effective. Planned actions such as 'The Big Edit' (which is a programme of regular opportunities for pupils to redraft and improve their writing with support from staff) are supported by professional development opportunities, targeted at whole-school priorities or the needs of particular groups of pupils. These have led to improvements in the recent rates of progress across the school but have yet to have an impact on longer-term achievement. The work of governors and senior leaders provides firm foundations for further improvement. Middle leaders monitor their

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subjects but do not always spot areas of weakness in teaching, or communicate the improvements needed to teachers, clearly enough.

Pupils in danger of underachieving are identified and supported increasingly well. This is shown by the successes in improving achievement for pupils learning English as an additional language and girls in mathematics, and reflects the school's growing capacity to promote equality and tackle discrimination. However, the skills of leaders at different levels in checking the success of strategies to drive improvement are variable.

The leader and staff of the unit for hearing impaired pupils provide ongoing advice and support to teachers to adapt particular resources, methods and approaches to individual needs based on this information. They monitor the impact of teaching and support on learning and progress but do not always identify quickly enough when pupils' progress slows.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs, provides the basic skills and adequately prepares them for the future. Well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means pupils are reflective, respectful and considerate towards others. Their knowledge of other cultures and traditions is more limited. Interesting, popular extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs provide experiences pupils might not gain otherwise: visits out of school and a residential trip.

Procedures and policies to safeguard pupils are good and meet government requirements. The headteacher and governors have established effective procedures to oversee the safety of the school site, and all responsible adults have been appropriately vetted to ensure the pupils' well-being.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lexden Primary School with Unit for Hearing Impaired Pupils, Colchester, CO3 9AS

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently, and for telling us your views – including those some of you put in questionnaires. Lexden is a satisfactory school. We noticed how well behaved you are and how good your attendance is. Well done! Those are very important so do keep them up. We also noted that you feel safe in school and take good care of one another.

You make satisfactory progress, including those of you who work in the unit, and the standards you reach in English and mathematics are average. Your reading is better than your writing and mathematics. This is because you do not have enough opportunities to practise writing in all subjects, or to solve mathematical problems. Teaching is satisfactory. Your teachers work hard to make lessons fun, and you told us how you enjoyed them.

We have asked the school's leaders to do some things that will help improve your education. We have asked them to help you to reach higher standards and make faster progress in writing by planning ways for you to practise writing across all of your subjects, and to set you work in mathematics that makes you think hard, particularly for those of you who find work easy. We have also asked them to make sure teaching is always at least good by telling you exactly how to improve your work and providing times when you can work by yourselves.

You can help by working as hard as you can, and telling your teacher if you find work too easy or are unsure of how to make your work better.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

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