

Long Mead Community Primary School

Waveney Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 3JU

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils make progress at rates which are too variable. Although they reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6, not enough is achieved at the start of Key Stage 2, especially for boys.
- Teaching and planning are not yet uniformly good. This affects how well some pupils understand what they are supposed to be learning and the rates at which they progress.
- Not enough attention is paid to the accuracy of spelling, handwriting and general presentation of pupils' written work.
- Literacy and numeracy lessons are not planned with enough precision to take account of the range of ability within the class, or the way younger pupils learn best.
- There are not enough opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills regularly in other subjects such as history, geography or religious education.
- Leaders, including governors, monitor teaching; but the best practice in teaching is not yet shared often enough to ensure that it is consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- The Head of School has a high profile in the school and local community. Her strong leadership is now beginning to bring about clear improvements to pupils' learning.
- The Federation Principal has already made notable contributions to improving provision at this school by increasing the capacity of key leaders to identify weaknesses, improve teaching and tackle underachievement, with increasing success.
- Pupils with special educational needs are identified rapidly. They receive good support to enable them to develop the learning and behaviour skills they need to make good progress in everything they do at school.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are consistently good. Pupils show respect for each other and adults, which contributes well to a positive and cooperative learning environment.
- Many parents value how well their children are cared for and supported in their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons of which two were joint observations with the Head of School.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's data for tracking pupils' progress; monitoring reports; pupils' work in books; school policies on safeguarding and special educational needs; attendance records; minutes of governing body meetings; classroom displays; and, the resources for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Head of School, the Executive Principal, subject leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor. Inspectors also talked to a representative of the local authority.
- Nine pupils read to inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

June Woolhouse, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Emma Merva

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of a federation with the Hugh Christie Technology College and Little Foxes Children's Centre. The executive headteacher is based at the Hugh Christie Technology College and the head of school at Long Mead Community Primary School.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action or school action plus is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- An above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils entitled to free school meals or for those whose parents or carers are serving in the armed forces.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage part time in the Nursery class and full time in the Reception class at the start of the academic year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is currently organised into seven classes, two of which are mixed age.
- There is a breakfast club each day managed by the governing body.
- The school shares the site with Little Foxes Children's Centre, which is subject to a separate inspection.
- There is no alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - planning for the different abilities in each class by building on what pupils already know
 - setting clear aims at the start of each lesson so that pupils know what they are going to learn
 - providing clear guidance to individual pupils about how to improve their work and correct mistakes
 - having consistently higher expectations for the presentation of good quality work
 - set accurate and challenging targets for each year group, particularly in Years 2 and 3, and undertake regular updates about how each pupil is meeting them
 - establishing a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting and spelling.
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - teaching reading and writing skills regularly so that pupils have tools for the rest of their learning
 - checking that all younger pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds is fully established, as a priority, so these pupils can tackle new words and develop into fluent readers more quickly
 - ensure that pupils practise basic number facts and skills regularly so that they can apply them to solve mathematical or scientific problems
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use books regularly in lessons to consolidate and deepen their reading skills.
- Improve the organisation and impact of the curriculum by:
 - identifying more clearly what subject knowledge pupils will learn
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking, listening, reading, writing and problem solving skills in their topic work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but rates of progress vary too much in the middle years of the school. Pupils do not make consistent progress in some year group because teaching is not sufficiently well planned to meet individual pupils' learning needs. Work in pupils' books and information from teachers' assessment records show that standards in some year groups are not high enough.
- Children begin in the Nursery class with skills that are generally below those expected for their age. They achieve well and reach the expected levels by the end of the Reception class because there is well-planned provision and skilled teaching by adults who understand the needs of young children. Children learn by active involvement in a rich and interesting variety of activities which are planned equally well both indoors and outside.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 have improved steadily for the past three years. They are now comparable to the national average. Pupils begin the key stage with standards that are significantly below average. They make accelerated progress and achieve well in Years 5 and 6, but are often having to catch up because progress earlier in their time at the school has been too uneven.
- Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is improving, although pupils' writing skills are less well developed than those in reading and mathematics. There has been improvement in literacy, with a focus on writing, but pupils do not receive enough regular, teacher-led practice to guarantee fluency in either reading or writing.
- School leaders know that boys achieve less well than girls from an early age, but the gap is beginning to close as individuals receive further support to improve their literacy skills. Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress because their specific needs are identified quickly and they receive extra individual or small-group support by well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils who are entitled to pupil premium support in Year 6 make at least the expected progress because they receive dedicated teaching from teachers in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils throughout the school receiving this funding also benefit from wider curricular experiences, such as visits and trips as part of the school's policy for inclusion, eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity.
- More than half the pupils in Year 1 achieved the required standard in the phonics test, showing that they know the letter names and the sounds that they make. This was comparable to national results. However, the phonics knowledge required as a basic foundation for reading with understanding is still not fully in place in the less fluent readers in Year 2.
- Pupils throughout the school do not read as often as they should to establish the skills to tackle new texts, read for pleasure or to extract information in a range of other subjects such as history, geography, religious education or science. Although the school encourages the need for regular practice at home, few pupils are given the opportunity or support that they require.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to assure rapid progress in each year group so that pupils achieve or exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each year. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6 is typically effective, but in other year groups it is notably weaker.
- Teaching is less effective and does not lead to good progress when pupils are confused about what they are supposed to be learning. Teachers' explanations lack clarity because teachers do not present the information in sufficient detail for pupils to build on what they have already learned or because basic numeracy and literacy facts are not thoroughly in place. Pupils' knowledge and understanding have not been assessed accurately and these gaps in their

learning mean pupils make too little progress and in some lessons lose interest.

- Marking of pupils' written work has improved in regularity, but does not contribute enough to their understanding of what must be done to improve or correct mistakes in spelling, punctuation or calculation. Many books are scrappy and the overall presentation lacks quality or an awareness of good presentation. The exception is in Years 1, 5 and 6. Learning targets are present in some books, but not others, and are often at the wrong level for the individual pupils concerned. This means that pupils are not always guided accurately towards the next steps in learning.
- Assessment of the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics is completed each term and recorded on a school-wide tracking system. Pupil progress meetings follow on and the attainment and progress of every pupil are discussed with senior leaders. Good records exist and each year's performance, including all relevant groups, is available for analysis. Not all teachers' assessments are sufficiently accurate to inform their subsequent planning and curriculum organisation. In turn, pupils' progress is slowed down.
- Teaching is effective and results in good learning when activities and tasks match pupils' needs and when what pupils are going to learn is clearly explained at the start of the lesson. Pupils have time to develop their ideas by talking them through with a partner or by contributing their ideas, as a whole group, which are then recorded for everyone to consider. Pupils have sufficient information and understanding to tackle a range of problems from this point onwards.
- Teaching in all classes does engender warm relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils are treated with respect and consideration because their social and emotional needs are well known and understood by all staff. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Teaching assistants are well deployed to give extra support to individuals or small groups resulting in good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils enjoy school and say they are well cared for and know who will help them if they have a problem. In the main, they have positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well in class activities. Even when lessons are not very interesting they rarely interrupt the learning of their classmates. Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because attitudes to learning are not exemplary.
- Pupils attend school regularly and attendance has improved since the last inspection. Those who are persistently absent are assiduously monitored and encouraged to attend so that they can benefit from the nurturing environment the school provides.
- Pupil safety and well-being are a school priority. The vigilance of the headteacher and her extensive experience of managing individual pupils' emotional and educational needs contribute significantly to a happy and safe learning environment. All adults provide positive role models for good behaviour, good manners, consideration and respect for others, which contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils understand what is meant by bullying, but it is rarely part of school life and is dealt with swiftly when it does occur. The school's teaching programme for personal, social and health education is the foundation on which pupils' knowledge and understanding are built. They are taught how to keep safe and this includes managing internet access safely.
- Parents are satisfied that their children are safe at school. They are consulted regularly and are provided with substantial advice on e-safety via the school's comprehensive website. Professional agencies work well together to support the most vulnerable pupils and to keep them safe.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management have improved since the school's federation with the local technology college. Experienced senior leaders who have joined the school from the college have

increased its capacity to accelerate progress and raise standards by the end of Year 6. The 2012 results were the best the school has achieved in the past four years. Standards in English and mathematics are now in line with national averages.

- The headteacher has continued to inspire teachers to go the extra mile for the pupils, to manage new arrivals to their classes and the temporary disruption this sometimes causes. She is visible around the school and on the playground and has the deserved trust of the parents who look to her for guidance and support in managing their children's schooling.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have successfully directed resources into improving the teaching skills of those whose pupils are not making the right amount of progress each year. The most effective teaching has resulted in the oldest pupils achieving well and being properly prepared for the next stage of their education in secondary schools. The school now has a model of very effective teaching.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and learning and rigorous management of performance have led to improved teaching. Leaders know where the weaknesses lie and have acted decisively when the appropriate expectations for good or better teaching are not met. They are increasingly focused on pupils' academic performance so that achievement in reading, writing and mathematics continues to improve.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, but the drive to raise standards in the important areas of English and mathematics has led to reduced opportunities for planned application of these skills across other curriculum subjects. Moreover, it is not always clear enough what subject knowledge pupils are expected to learn. The headteacher is aware of this temporary imbalance and plans are in place to use these key literacy and numeracy skills systematically in topic work.
- Local authority support has contributed well to improvements in teaching through dedicated training. Action plans are well focused on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Other agency personnel give good support to the school's management of vulnerable pupils and attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has good systems in place to hold the school to account and challenge it to improve on its weaknesses. It is aware of how well pupils achieve compared with other schools. Governors are regularly involved in monitoring what goes on in classrooms. Their experience across the federation has increased the capacity to provide strategic direction to leaders and managers. The deployment of very experienced leaders to the primary school has improved outcomes and led to higher standards by the end of Year 6. In turn, the technology college gains from this smooth transition of better prepared pupils into the secondary school. The governing body has overseen the allocation of pupil premium funding to those who should receive it. Senior leaders give detailed information of its impact which has informed governors of its effectiveness. The gap between these pupils' performance and the rest of the pupils is closing rapidly. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Performance management of all staff is rigorous and governors are aware of the need to align staff salaries with how well pupils achieve. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118575
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401765

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	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Broom
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Powell
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 February 2010
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