



The Leys Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 117364
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280056
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector . Linda Killman LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ripon Road
School category	Community		SG1 4QZ
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01438 314 148
Number on roll	377	Fax number	01438 721 364
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Martin Lloyd
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Cheryl Salmon

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Leys Primary and Nursery School is a larger than average community school. A significantly higher than average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals and almost half of the pupils currently receive additional support for their learning difficulties and disabilities. Last year, the Local Authority reorganised local schools and a significant number of the older children transferred to the Leys partway through the school year. The majority of pupils are White British and there is a low number of pupils whose first language is not English. The school hosts two units for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities from other schools and a pre-school group. Many teachers have taught at the school for some time. The headteacher has been in post for just under a year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors judge the school's overall effectiveness as satisfactory, although the school judges itself to be good. Children get off to a flying start in the nursery. The children's attainment on entry to the school is below average but they rapidly make progress in their learning. Good teaching in the Reception year enables the pupils to achieve what is broadly expected for their age. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils achieve satisfactory standards in reading and mathematics but writing is significantly below expected levels for seven-year-olds. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average in all subjects and the pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Though inconsistent at times, teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Where teaching is best, the teachers know exactly what the children need to learn next to make good progress and pupils of all abilities are set challenging tasks. Leadership and management are satisfactory and successful in providing a satisfactory education and care for the pupils. However, more could be done to improve pupils' understanding of their own learning and what they need to do to improve. Most parents speak highly of the school and value the contribution it makes to their children's personal development. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement planning is satisfactory, although there is a need for all staff to focus on the school's actions to improve and drive standards up. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides adequate value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of writing throughout the school. - Develop a systematic, consistent approach to checking the progress that pupils make and helping pupils to identify precisely what they need to learn next to make good progress. - Improve consistency in teaching across the school so that the pace in lessons is brisk and the pupils' work is more accurately matched to their differing needs and abilities. - Ensure that there is a focused, energetic drive by all staff to increase the pupils' achievement and to raise standards

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From a very low starting point on entry to the Nursery, the children make good progress because the adults have high expectations and challenge them to do their best. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are just below average. Their knowledge and understanding of the world are above average, and their personal and social development, together with their physical and creative skills, is average. In the rest of the school, pupils make steady progress. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in reading and mathematics are broadly average, but in writing they are below average. At the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics but better in science. Boys do better than girls. In English, there is a weakness in the pupils' ability to write at length. Pupils' basic number skills are

usually sound in mathematics, but many are not effective in applying these skills to solve problems. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of science, but there are weaknesses in some of their skills of scientific enquiry. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are making satisfactory progress. The school just missed its targets in English and mathematics for Year 6 pupils in 2005.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They behave well in lessons and during break times, responding positively to the rules. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn. They feel safe and secure in this warm, friendly school and show care and consideration for each other. They appreciate having a 'voice' in school through the school council and in discussions with staff and have made many sensible suggestions for improvement. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Attendance is below national averages but the school has put a variety of procedures in place to encourage good attendance and to support children and families experiencing difficulties. The school contacts parents on the first day that their child is absent and, as a result, casual absence is being reduced. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. They enjoy their physical education lessons and can make good choices of healthy foods. Social development is good. From their earliest days in the Nursery they are encouraged to be confident and independent. Pupils are proud to be playground 'buddies' and look out for opportunities to be helpful in and around school. They make the most of the variety of school clubs available for them to join. A range of arts and musical activities adds to pupils' cultural development, and their understanding of other ways of life and faiths is good. Most pupils acquire satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills to help them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, teaching is consistently good in the Nursery and Reception classes because there is a buzz of learning activity in lessons. Well-chosen activities capture the children's interest and assessment information is used effectively to plan the next steps of learning for each pupil. In the rest of the school, strengths of the teaching include effective class management and very good relationships, which result in pupils' good attitudes to learning. In lessons, teachers effectively explain to pupils what they are going to learn and what they expect to see when their work is completed. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching and learning. In a minority of lessons, the pace of teaching is too slow, instructions and questions are too general, and work is not well matched to pupils' differing learning needs. In these lessons teaching is mundane and lacks variety and vibrancy. The school has a range of data to track the progress of pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, these assessment data are not

yet effectively used by all teachers to make sure that any underachievement is addressed, and to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Teachers are using a variety of methods to help pupils to identify short-term challenging targets for improvement but many pupils are not clear enough about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's broad and balanced curriculum provides a sound range of learning activities, together with some good opportunities for enrichment. There is a wide range of activities provided in physical education, with a local sports training provider offering some coaching in specialist sports. Enrichment experiences include residential journeys for pupils in Years 4 and 6, and a good range of extra-curricular clubs. Pupils from the two classes in Year 6 are placed in three ability sets for mathematics and four sets for English. This is helping to match the work to pupils' learning needs. Pupils are placed in two sets for these subjects in other year groups. However, the activities provided in lessons do not always match the pupils' abilities and needs closely enough. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefits from the Specific Learning Difficulties Base on the school's site.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good care for all the pupils. Most children can identify an adult to whom they would turn if they had a problem or concern. The governors have made sure that systems are in place to keep pupils safe and secure. There are strong and effective links with a wide variety of other agencies, alongside in-school groups to support those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The Nurture Group, for example, provides a strong support structure in school to help individuals to develop self-confidence and independence and the staff work closely with parents and families. Although the school supports pupils' personal development very effectively, it does not provide the same quality of support to guide them in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are committed to raising the standards, achievement and personal development of all pupils and to ensuring their well-being. Most of the school's evaluations about the school's performance are accurate but the school has been over-optimistic about its overall effectiveness. Inspectors judge it as satisfactory rather than good. Pupils are well cared for and the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. Teaching is satisfactory and the pupils benefit from high levels of staffing and a range of learning resources. Since the previous inspection the school has made sure that pupils spend the right amount of time on different subjects. The school has begun to collect and look closely at a range of information about the pupils'

progress. Using this information, decisions are taken about changes that need to be made to move the school forward. There is a satisfactory improvement plan in place that is linked to raising standards. However, too many activities are planned and the school's priorities are not always driven forward systematically, consistently and with determination by all staff across the school. Governors know the school well and rightly share the headteacher's view that improvements are needed. They receive regular information about teaching and learning and carry out their duties effectively. The school consults parents and makes changes in the light of their views. For example, some parents highlighted that bullying was an issue for their children. In response, the school has successfully introduced an anti-bullying policy. Good links are made with a wide range of agencies who are involved in supporting large numbers of pupils to ensure that the pupils' needs are met. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all so much for the warm welcome that we received when we visited your school. We were all impressed with your good manners and politeness. We lost count of the number of children who greeted us cheerfully (and sometimes in French), or held doors open for us. You told us a lot about your school that helped us to get to know the school very well in a short time. We visited your classes, spoke to you at break times and spent a lot of time talking to teachers, other staff and governors. This is what we found out: - Most of your parents are happy that you come to this school; they believe that you are taught well and cared for at school. - You enjoy school and you are willing and eager to learn. - The school encourages you to be safe and to stay healthy. - You take part in lots of activities and events during the school year. - You make progress as you move through the school and by the time you leave, most of you are working at the levels expected for your age group. - One pupil told us that she did not mind travelling a long way every day because it is the best school in the area. - Another told us that there is bullying in the school. When we spoke to other children they told us that teachers do listen when you need help and that action is taken when children are made to feel unhappy. We have made some suggestions to help your school to improve even more. - Your teachers are going to tell you exactly what you need to learn next so that you can achieve your very best. - You will find that everyone is working hard together to make changes in the way you are taught so that you all have the chance to learn as much as you can. - Continue to work harder at your writing. You can help by making sure that you come to school regularly and arrive on time every day. We wish you every success in the future.