



Lenham Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118294
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280287
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 23 May 2006
Reporting inspector Joan Greenfield AI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ham Lane
School category	Community		Lenham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Maidstone, Kent ME17 2QG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01622 858260
Number on roll	206	Fax number	01622 851652
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Nahab
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2006	Headteacher	Mrs H A Parker

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	23 May 2006 - 23 May 2006	280287

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. During the day visit, the inspector met with the headteacher, children, staff, the chair of governors and had discussions with several parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day. The programme included paired visits with the headteacher to a number of classes, the scrutiny of a range of documentation provided by the school and observation of the work of the school council. Responses from 52 questionnaires returned by parents also informed the writing of this report.

Description of the school

The school, which is situated in the village of Lenham, is slightly smaller than average. The area it serves is very mixed, with examples of considerable affluence and other areas of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Almost all children are of White British backgrounds. A higher than average proportion of children has learning difficulties and disabilities, including a small number with complex needs. The school has gained Activemark and FA Charter Development School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a few outstanding features. This judgement matches the school's own view of itself, although the school underestimates the quality of its work in some areas. For example, the way that it values and includes all children, including some with quite complex disabilities and needs, into the day-to-day life of the school is outstanding. In addition, the wide range of extra-curricular activities helps children to adopt active lifestyles extremely well. Children talk positively about these opportunities. Discussions in the school council meeting reflected the children's interest and involvement well, as they identified a further range of activities that they would like to include, with comments such as, 'my mum could do the basketball' and 'someone in my class would like a science club'.

Children do well and standards by Year 6 are well above average, a picture that has been maintained since 2003. This represents good progress for children who enter the school with average skills and experiences, although a number have weak social and literacy skills. They receive a good foundation in Reception through a well-planned and organised curriculum. The result is that the majority start Year 1 having reached the expected goals for learning, with several children exceeding them in many areas of learning. However, the outdoor area does not provide them with the interest and challenge that is evident in other aspects of their curriculum. The school recognises that this is an area for development and has already taken steps to make improvements, although more remains to be done. Elsewhere, the curriculum meets the needs of children well. The school has rightly identified the need to align the curriculum in Year 1 more closely with that in Reception and has made a start of this.

Children enjoy coming to school and most are enthusiastic about learning. One commented 'it's good to learn' and another said 'I wish I could come on Saturdays and Sundays'. Parents confirm that their children like school and feel that their children are safe and well cared for. The quality of the relationships and the effectiveness of the arrangements for supporting children who may be troubled or have problems ensure that children's personal development is fostered well so that they quickly grow in confidence. The effective systems for tracking children's progress and setting them challenging targets in literacy and numeracy ensure that children receive additional support as needed. In other subjects, the arrangements for checking how well children are doing are not as consistent and this is an area for further development.

The good teaching enables children to make good progress. Teachers plan well to provide children with challenging work and to make it interesting. Children do particularly well in mathematics, and their achievement in the national tests in 2005 was exceptionally high. Older children said 'we like maths a lot', citing examples of interesting problem-solving activities that are preparing them well for adult life.

The commitment of staff to meeting the needs of all children in the school is exemplary, with the result that it provides an atmosphere in which all children are able to do their best. 'Enjoy and achieve' are central to the school's work and staff work hard to make sure that every child matters. The driving force for this is the energy and direction

provided by the headteacher who has an extremely clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do to improve further. According to one parent, 'she instils an air of confidence to both parents and children'.

The school's priorities are articulated well in the school improvement plan, which provides a clear agenda for further improvement. Most of the actions identified in the current plan have been implemented, although some have not been in place long enough to result in measurable improvement. Nevertheless, the seeds are firmly in place to enable the school to move forward swiftly from its current position to become even better. The school's capacity to improve is strong as all staff are keen and enthusiastic, and in some cases are taking the initiative to tackle individual issues. All the weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed successfully, especially the improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). The school has good systems for involving parents in its work and the termly newsletter produced by the children keeps them well informed of the school's successes, developments and events. The school gives good value for money.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All children do well irrespective of their background and ability. They get off to a flying start in Reception from their broadly average starting points to reach above average standards by Year 6. Children achieve exceptionally well in mathematics and the reasons for the dip in the English results in 2005 from their previously well above average standards have been identified and addressed. In the past, children have not done quite as well in Years 1 and 2 as elsewhere in the school, but this has been tackled through a new look at how the curriculum is planned and organised. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as they receive good support from their teachers and the teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's real concern for the well-being of the children ensures that their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good. Children enjoy school and are keen to learn. Play times are full of energy and activity. Children behave well in class and around the school. They say that a few children can be unkind to others but know that the staff will deal with it very quickly. The wish of one child was 'to make all bullies kind'. Attendance has improved and is on course to be better than last year when it was average. Children undertake responsibilities around the school well and the school has plans to extend their involvement through a 'buddy' scheme. This will add another dimension to the 'friendship bench' that already exists in the playground to provide support for more vulnerable children. The school council plays an active part in contributing to the school's development, for example in discussing proposals to make the playground more interesting for games and other activities, and contributing to a revision of the school's aims. Children raise money for

charities that they have chosen themselves. The extent of their involvement in sporting activities shows their very good understanding of the need to keep fit and healthy. Their well developed literacy, numeracy and ICT skills stand them in good stead for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children are taught well. The interest and enthusiasm of teachers, with the good support of the teaching assistants, motivates them to make good progress. Well planned and organised lessons ensure that the different needs of children are catered for effectively, and the sharing of the lesson's focus enables children to know what it is they are expected to learn. The records of children's work kept in each classroom and the regular checks on their progress help teachers to know what children need to learn next and to set them further challenges. Marking is regular and supportive and often helps children to know what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children enjoy a well planned curriculum that is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular and other enrichment activities. The school has placed particular emphasis on improving children's writing, an area of relative weakness identified through its self-evaluation, and is implementing a new scheme to remedy this. Work has started to make the curriculum lower down the school, especially in Year 1, more appropriate for children of this age and to link it more closely to the well-constructed programme in Reception. This is a good step forward.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for its children well and they receive good guidance and support from their teachers, other staff and, where necessary, other agencies. Vulnerable children, of whom there are many, are carefully monitored and given good levels of individual support. Child protection arrangements are fully in place and there are good systems for ensuring children's health and safety. Good provision is made for the more able children. The tracking of children's academic progress against their targets is thorough, especially in literacy and numeracy, but they are not quite so robust in other areas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The shared understanding and the commitment of all those involved with the school shows that this is a well-led and managed school. The headteacher leads by example.

Her clear vision of the school's direction has enabled children with a wide range of needs to be fully integrated into school life, with their individual needs met successfully. A striking feature of the school is the feeling of teamwork and optimism amongst the staff. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and its priorities are the right ones. Procedures for checking the school's effectiveness are robust at senior management level but are not as firmly established amongst the subject leaders. Governors play a strong and active role in the school's development. The monitoring reports that they produce, the most recent being on how well the school is responding to the Every Child Matters agenda, are particularly useful. Resources are managed effectively but insufficient financial information is included in the school improvement plan.

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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?	2	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	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	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	1	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to many of you about the work that you do and finding out what you think about your school. This letter tells you some of the things that I particularly liked about your school.

• You go to a good school that enables you all to do well. • You work hard and make good progress in lessons. • You like coming to school and particularly enjoy the very good range of activities that the school arranges for you at lunchtimes and after school. • The teachers give you challenging work to do and help to make learning fun. Some of the photographs in the class diaries show that you have done some very interesting work this year. • You are friendly and polite to each other and to visitors, and most of you behave well as the school expects you to. • Your headteacher and other staff know how well you are doing and how to help you do even better. • The staff make sure that all of you receive good care and support so that you get the most out of being in the school.

Mrs Parker and the other teachers who run your school know what it does well and what it needs to do to get even better. They have already identified the things that I have asked them to look at further. For example, there are plans to improve the outdoor play area in the Reception class, to make some changes to the curriculum in Year 1, and to help teachers find out in more detail how well you are doing and what could be done better. You can help them in this by doing your very best in all that you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future, particularly the children in Year 6 who will soon be going on to their new schools. I hope you all continue to do well.