



River Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118393
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280308
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lewisham Road
School category	Community		Dover
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kent CT17 0PP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 822516
Number on roll	406	Fax number	01304 829 212
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Neil Beverton
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Lawrence

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	Inspection number 280308
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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 school is bigger than most primary schools. Most pupils come from River but more pupils are coming from a wider area. Standards on entry are average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage with special educational needs is average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic communities is below average and few have a first language other than English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

River Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school sees itself in this way and inspectors agree. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. They reach average standards by the end of the reception year and make sound progress. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 with standards that are average. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress in their learning.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils very much enjoy being at school and their behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes and feel safe and valued as individuals. Staff take very good care of pupils. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers seek to make lessons interesting to ensure pupils learn, but some do not have a clear view of what pupils need to do next to enable them to make rapid progress. Procedures to involve pupils in assessing their own work are more effective in some classes than others. Pupils with learning difficulties receive effective support. The curriculum is satisfactory with good use made of specialist expertise from outside the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher has made a very good start, having taken appropriate action to bring about improvements. Some aspects of subject leadership remain undeveloped.

Parents hold the school in high regard and are very happy with what it offers. The school uses resources well and provides satisfactory value for money.

The school has addressed many, but not all, of the areas for improvement in the last inspection report. Standards have not risen as expected in line with national trends. However, the school believes, and inspectors agree, that under the decisive leadership of the new headteacher, it now has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure staff with subject responsibilities monitor the provision and standards in their subject more effectively and use the findings to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement, especially at Key Stage 1.
- Develop more consistent procedures for involving pupils in assessing their own progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress in the reception year. Last year they entered Year 1 with broadly average standards. Standards in the 2005 national tests at the end of Year 2 were also broadly average. Girls did significantly better than boys. The scores have declined in recent years, especially in reading and mathematics although results rose marginally in writing. The school recognises the need to arrest this decline and to raise standards, especially for boys. The number of pupils gaining the higher grades in the 2005 tests was below the national average.

Pupils enter the junior part of the school with average attainment. At the end of Year 6, results in the 2005 national tests were broadly in line with the national average in English and mathematics but below average in science. In 2005, fewer pupils gained the higher levels of attainment than expected nationally. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, but progress in English and mathematics is better than in science. No groups of pupils are significantly underachieving. The school experienced difficulties in meeting all the ambitious statutory targets in 2005. Pupils are not making consistently good progress in lessons, so are not reaching higher standards, because the quality of teaching and assessment is too variable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. In reception, children work and play happily, feeling safe and secure. Pupils enjoy coming to school and respond with interest to their work. Their attendance is better than in most primary schools. They are polite, and their behaviour is very good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are confident in speaking and expressing their opinions. Teachers and assistants provide good role models, and relationships between the adults in school and pupils are very good, making pupils secure in their learning environment.

Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities suitable for their ages, and they make a valuable and active contribution to the life of the school through involvement in the school council, which has representatives from every class. Pupils support and organise fundraising themselves for a number of charities. Older pupils act as 'buddies' for children starting school, and as helpers for routine classroom duties. These experiences, as well as the basic skills they learn, help prepare pupils for their future lives and eventual economic well-being.

Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral, social and cultural development is strong, and assemblies contribute to the pupils' spiritual education. In personal, health and social education, science and physical education, pupils demonstrate their good knowledge of how to stay safe and lead healthy lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although pupils have made sound progress in recent years, teachers have not measured this carefully enough to have a clear view of what pupils need to do next, to improve at a faster rate and to achieve the high standards of which some of them are capable. Good systems are now being introduced to enable teachers to do this consistently across the school, and to provide pupils with clear guidance on the next steps in their learning. This is also beginning to improve the marking of pupils' work so that guidance on what they need to do next is clear.

Action by the new headteacher is already improving teaching. A Year 2 science lesson was particularly effective because it was made clear to pupils at the outset what they were expected to learn. The teacher provided a variety of practical activities, carefully matched to pupils' different abilities, which helped make their learning purposeful. As well as the teacher and teaching assistant actively assessing their progress, pupils were also asked to evaluate how well they had learnt.

Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs so that these pupils achieve as well as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is satisfactory. It has some good features which promote pupils' enjoyment of learning and are much appreciated by parents. Teachers have recently planned a curriculum that makes coherent links between subjects and is underpinned with practical activities. Measures to ensure pupils are provided with suitably challenging work are also now being established. Good use is also made of specialist expertise from outside the school. Year 6 pupils, for example, benefit from lessons taught by a mathematics teacher from a local secondary school. Pupils' enjoyment and their appreciation of the wider world are fostered through a wide range of visits, school clubs and other experiences. Of particular note are after school clubs at which pupils can enjoy learning Italian or drama, and regular swimming sessions which ensure pupils become competent swimmers and acquire water safety skills.

Teachers take active steps to support pupils with particular talents through provision in school or encouragement to join specialist organisations, such as the local gymnastics club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care for pupils is good, and the school places sound emphasis on supporting and including all pupils. Parents and carers have regular opportunities for meeting teachers to discuss their children's progress, and they receive regular reports on their children's achievements. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored.

Health and safety procedures are in place and regularly reviewed, and there are appropriate arrangements for child protection; all teachers and assistants, who actively promote pupils' safety and welfare, are fully familiar with these.

Support and guidance for pupils in their academic work is not yet consistent across the school, although pupils with special educational needs receive effective support for the next steps in their learning. Other pupils are not involved enough in identifying and understanding what they need to do to improve. The school works well with relevant external agencies to provide appropriate help for pupils with specific problems.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recently appointed headteacher has made an impressive start and provides good leadership with a clear view of the direction the school should take. She has re-energised a whole-school drive for improvement and enabled staff to share her vision and to work together to achieve common goals. Staff say that she has given them 'a new enthusiasm'. A new and highly determined leadership team is emerging. The school evaluates its work accurately. Well planned staff training and good links with advisers and other schools have accelerated and reinforced the improvements taking place. The school recognises that it needs to provide sharply focused strategies to raise pupils' achievement and has produced suitable plans to enable it to do so. Under the leadership team, it has a good capacity to improve.

Appropriate actions have rapidly been introduced to address the variable quality of planning, teaching, assessment and subject leadership across the school. Those with responsibilities are beginning to monitor teaching and standards more effectively but planned improvements are not yet fully embedded across the school.

The governing body ensures the school meets all its legal responsibilities. Governors are playing an increasingly active and effective role in improving the work of the school and holding it to account. Parental responses to a recent questionnaire are very positive about the school's senior leaders and full of praise for the genuine care shown to their children. Almost all parents indicated that their children enjoy school.

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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	3	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	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	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

River Primary School Lewisham Road River Dover Kent CT17 0PP

Dear Pupils

I am writing on behalf of the team of inspectors who visited your school recently to let you know what we think about the school. Thank you for your help in talking to us about the work you do and telling us what you think about the school.

We think your school provides a satisfactory education for you. We also think that your new headteacher is doing a good job. She is working very hard to make the school better so that you can all do as well as possible. We know you enjoy coming to school because you told us, we saw this for ourselves, and your parents agreed. We believe that everyone in your school takes good care of you and you get on very well with each other. You told us that you feel safe and know that there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem. Teachers listen to what you say and the school council makes things happen.

We saw that you try hard in lessons but we think that you could do even better. Your new headteacher has a lot of good ideas to help you to learn more. Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Your parents are very happy with the school and all that it provides for you, in and out of lessons.

The school could do some things better. Teachers need to give you more help in understanding how well you are doing and what you could do to improve. Some teachers who look after subjects need to check more carefully on how well everybody in the school is getting on in their subject. Then they can use the information to help them improve the way they teach you.

Yours faithfully

Ian Hartland Her Majesty's Inspector