



Longford Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124074
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281622
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Sims AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ascot Drive
School category	Community		Cannock
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Staffordshire WS11 1PD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01543 510390
Number on roll	400	Fax number	01543 510390
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Craig Squire
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr H Stacey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	13 June 2006 - 14 June 2006	281622

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Longford Primary School is a larger than average primary school with its own Nursery. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' social and economic backgrounds vary widely but are slightly below average overall. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

After a number of years in which pupils have underachieved, Longford Primary School has turned the corner and is starting to improve again. It currently provides its pupils with a satisfactory education, a judgement with which the school itself concurs. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The pastoral care provided by the staff and pupils' personal development are the school's main strengths, factors which have attracted a significant number of new pupils to the school this year. Standards of behaviour are generally good and most pupils enjoy coming to school, as indicated by an above average level of attendance.

Good quality education in the Nursery and Reception classes provides children with a good start to their education, enabling them to improve from below average attainment on entry to just below average by the time they start Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, changes in staffing and better teaching have led to some significant improvements, and pupils are now making satisfactory progress once again.

The school's leaders are aware of what needs to be improved and how improvement can be secured. Over the last year, good progress has been made in dealing with weaknesses in teaching, curricular planning and the assessment of pupils' performance. The quality of education, leadership and management are all satisfactory.

There is still much to be done. Pupils are capable of achieving more in all subjects, but especially in English, where boys' writing is particularly weak and in reading in Years 1 and 2. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, but could be more challenging still, particularly in pointing out to pupils how they could improve their work. There are sound systems for checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' work, but priorities and actions for improvement are not always clear. However, there is a good team spirit and the will to succeed, and the recent improvements show that the school has the capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly that of boys, throughout the school and in reading in Years 1 and 2.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving so that they set pupils more challenging tasks, and ensure that teachers provide pupils with clearer guidance on how to improve their work.
- Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the school's priorities, that teachers know what is expected of them and that effective action is taken to deal with these priorities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The level of attainment when children join the Nursery varies considerably. It is below average overall, but has been higher in the past. Children make good progress in both Nursery and Reception, particularly in their

personal, social and emotional development. Standards are not far short of average by the time they start Year 1.

Standards at the end of Year 2 remain below the national average in reading and writing, but average in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils are set to achieve average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is a much healthier picture than last year and represents satisfactory achievement overall. Improvements are linked to changes in staffing and more effective teaching. However, pupils can do even better. More able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, and not enough pupils achieve higher levels at the end of Year 2. Although the school has made the development of pupils' writing skills a priority, the quality of pupils' writing, particularly amongst the boys, remains a weakness throughout the school. A recent project to use more visual material to provide a stimulus for writing was successful and points a way forward for further improvement in this area. The school's targets represent a reasonable challenge. The school did not meet them in 2005, but looks as if it will exceed them in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown by their above average level of attendance. They participate well in lessons, and work well collaboratively and on their own from an early age. A recent survey of pupils' views highlighted concerns about the disruptive behaviour of some pupils, but a new behaviour policy has had a positive impact, and behaviour in the great majority of lessons and around the school is now good. School councillors take their role seriously and work well with adults to make a difference to the school. Pupils play their part in the local community and raise money for charities at home and abroad. Through an international project, pupils gain a clear understanding of life in countries such as Germany and the Gambia. These activities support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good.

All pupils enjoy physical exercise. They know what it means to eat healthily, but not all put this into practice. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they are worried. Typically, a pupil said 'If you've got a problem, a teacher will always help you.' Pupils say that any bullying is dealt with promptly and well. Pupils in Year 6 feel well prepared for their transfer to secondary school. Although they enjoy coming to school, not all pupils show a real desire to learn, and they do not yet have enough opportunities to develop independent learning skills, factors which hinder the development of skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the Nursery and Reception, it is good. In these classes, regular assessments of children's learning help teachers to

plan good lessons, which reflect high expectations and enable children to make good progress.

In Years 1 to 6, there have been weaknesses in the teaching in recent years, but there has been much improvement this year. For most of the time, teachers have appropriate expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, although they still limit pupils' achievement at times and do not always provide sufficient challenge for some pupils. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge which they use well to explain ideas to pupils, although their introductions can sometimes be too long, leaving little time for pupils to work independently. Systems for assessing pupils' work have improved and are now satisfactory, enabling teachers to keep track of pupils' progress. However, although teachers recognise the widely differing needs of pupils in their classes, they do not always take sufficient account of these needs when planning their lessons. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not provide sufficient practical guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Some aspects are good, such as the enriching educational and residential visits and the wide range of out-of-school activities enjoyed by many pupils. In the Nursery and Reception, curricular provision is good and teachers provide worthwhile and stimulating opportunities for learning. In Years 1 to 6, teachers provide a suitable programme of activities that enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. Given the need to raise standards in literacy, the growing emphasis on improving the quality of pupils' writing and the teaching of phonics is entirely appropriate. Recently, attention has been given to developing links between subjects to make lessons more enjoyable for pupils. However, teachers still do not make enough use of these links to improve pupils' writing or provide enough scope for pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Increasing use is made of information and communication technology (ICT), but the teaching of ICT skills is not always linked as well as it could be to the teaching of other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The standard of pastoral care is good and is appreciated by parents. The school is good at ensuring pupils are safe and at giving them confidence to approach adults if they have any concerns. Child protection procedures are well known to staff. Incidents of bullying are rare, and those that do occur are dealt with firmly. Induction arrangements for the youngest pupils are good. As a result, they settle quickly to school routines.

Academic support for pupils is improving and is generally satisfactory. Pupils are getting used to responding to the targets which are set for them. The detailed monitoring of pupils' academic progress has only been introduced this year. As a result, staff are much better informed of their pupils' progress than before and have a much clearer understanding of what constitutes good progress. However, they are still getting

used to using this information and do not always make enough use of it to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the previous inspection, the school has been through a difficult period, during which standards have fallen. During this time, the governance, leadership and management of the school have not been fully effective, and it has taken a long time to deal with some issues. However, these difficulties are now in the past. Greatly helped by input from a national school improvement programme, the quality of leadership and management has improved. It is now satisfactory and a new sense of purpose has led to a sea change, with improvements evident on all fronts. These improvements are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Significantly, staff appreciate the supportive approach of the headteacher and are now working together well as a team, which has not always been the case. There is a much better awareness than before of what needs to be done and a willingness on the part of all staff to examine what works well and what needs to improve. Pupils have the opportunity to voice their views through the school council, parents through an annual questionnaire, and plans to establish a more formal mechanism for working with parents and governors are well in hand. Although it has a sound understanding of what needs to be tackled, the school is not yet clear enough on what the most important priorities are or what actions need to be taken to bring improvement. There are appropriate mechanisms for checking on the quality of teaching, planning and pupils' work. However, the evaluations are not always sharp enough, leading to a somewhat generous interpretation of the school's own performance in some areas, and intended actions have not always been followed through. There is still much to be done, but improvements over the last year show that the school has the capacity to move forward under its own steam.

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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?	3	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	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	3	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

We enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us. These are the main things we found out:

- You are making much better progress in your work now than has been the case in the past, although you are capable of doing even more.
- Many of you, particularly boys, need to improve the quality of your writing, but it was good to see a recent project which motivated you to produce good writing.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school, participate well in lessons and make a positive contribution to the school through your good behaviour.
- You get on well with your teachers who have worked hard to improve their teaching to enable you to succeed.
- The staff care for you well, ensure that you feel safe in school and help to sort out any problems which arise.
- The staff work together well as a team and have made many improvements to the school over the last year.

In order to help you achieve the highest standards of which you are capable and to help you improve your writing, we have asked teachers to make sure they always provide you with work which is sufficiently challenging and give you clearer guidance on what you need to do to improve. We have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure that everybody knows what the school's main priorities and actions for improvement are.

We hope that you will cooperate with your teachers to make your school even better than it is now and that you continue to enjoy your time at Longford Primary School.