



Lawn Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118264
LEA Kent
Inspection number 283006
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector Roger Hartley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Maintained		Northfleet
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Gravesend, Kent DA11 9HB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01474 365303
Number on roll	130	Fax number	01474 534655
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Lyn Overette
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mr Mike Hickey

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Lawn Primary School is situated in Northfleet, an urban area of North East Kent. It is smaller than average and includes 12 children who attend the part-time Nursery. The school serves an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are 47% of pupils entitled to free meals, which is well above average. The number of pupils been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is also well above average; there are no pupils with a statement of special educational need.

The school was inspected in April 2000 and placed in special measures; since then it has received termly monitoring visits. At times the school appeared to be making reasonable progress only to slip back at subsequent monitoring inspections. Since the 2000 inspection the school has experienced chronic staffing difficulties, including a succession of headteachers, and termly staffing changes. As time went by, and the school's reputation remained in the doldrums, recruitment became increasingly difficult. There have been several terms when the school has not known whether teachers would be in place for the beginning of the following term. However, matters have improved dramatically since April 2005. The school has a permanent headteacher and is now fully staffed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The inspector agrees with the school's view of the overall effectiveness of its provision as being satisfactory. The judgement represents a major achievement when seen in the context of the considerable difficulties experienced during the lengthy period in which special measures were required. Although standards are low, there are signs of improvement, especially at Key Stage 1. However, a more encouraging indicator of success is the consistently good progress being made by pupils in all the classes. Children entering the Nursery receive at least a satisfactory and often good start to their education, characterised by a stimulating and well ordered learning environment, and an emphasis on developing communication skills. The pupils now enjoy coming to school; they are well behaved, look forward to challenges and are keen to learn. They are considerate of each other and relationships are a growing strength in the school.

The quality of teaching is good and is never less than satisfactory. Planning is thorough; work is increasingly well matched to pupils' needs; and adults are efficiently deployed. Teachers adopt a range of teaching styles and are keen to present work in ways that capture the pupils' imagination and concentration.

There are aspects of standards, assessment and attendance that need more work and some recent initiatives, which require time to be embedded in the school, but there is no doubt about the capacity of the school to continue its improvement.

The headteacher is providing effective leadership and management and is systematically addressing the weaknesses that were apparent at the time of the last inspection and those that have arisen since. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in all subjects of the National Curriculum
- develop further the use of assessment information to plan work that accurately meets the pupils' learning needs
- continue to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

At the time of the April 2000 inspection, the National Curriculum test results showed standards to be very low across the core subjects at the end of both key stages and amongst the very worst in the country. They have remained so for most of the intervening period. As time has gone by, gaps have appeared in the pupils' basic skills, which successive sets of teachers have been unable to resolve, so that pupils have fallen further and further behind. Inevitably, therefore, it is taking some time for the pupils to catch up, especially in Key Stage 2, and it is not surprising that the 2005 test results for these pupils are disappointing. However, there are indicators that the recent measures put in place are beginning to have a positive effect, particularly on the good

rate of progress and satisfactory levels of achievement, and that standards are well placed to rise. The 2005 Key Stage 1 assessments, moderated externally, show that almost all pupils reached their targets, and the majority exceeded them. Standards in lessons, although well below average overall, have also shown improvement and although there is still some way to go before they could be judged to be firmly satisfactory, levels of attainment achieved by some pupils, especially in literacy, numeracy, history and art, are edging towards what they should be.

The pace of learning was brisk in almost all the lessons observed, and the pupils made good or very good progress in all but one of them. This is very encouraging and is due in large measure to the good quality of teaching, work that challenges the pupils at appropriate levels, and a climate for learning that has had a very good effect on both the pupils' attitudes and their behaviour.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Over time, the pupils have fallen out of the habit of 'coming to school to learn'. They have been apathetic, unwilling to cooperate, and in some cases, have actively worked against the best efforts of the teachers by being badly behaved and disrupting the learning to an unacceptable degree. All of that has changed. The headteacher has set up a rigorous system for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, and since its introduction, the number of pupils receiving a 'black card' for the most serious offences, has dropped by almost half, while bullying incidents have similarly reduced. Behaviour and general attitudes to learning are now good.

A casualty of the disaffection that had built up over time has been attendance rates. The headteacher is determined to tackle absence, and is having some success. There are reward systems both for class and individual 'best' attendance and, importantly, parents are being encouraged through meetings, letters and individual discussions with school staff to make sure their children attend. Attendance figures have improved but there is still some way to go before they reach acceptable levels.

Pupils' views are listened to, and they show an increasing degree of self-esteem and independence. They know what to do and whom to confide in if they have a problem. There is a rising number of activities to develop their social and cultural awareness through visits locally and further afield, links with local religious groups and inviting members of the community to talk to pupils. The pupils' academic achievements are being promoted through regional competitions; for example a solar car design competition and a story published in a book entitled 'The Little Book of Bus Stories'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is now good and never less than satisfactory. The teaching is much more confident and vital, and reflects the growing confidence of the staff to plan work that

is both interesting and relevant, and captures the attention and enthusiasm of pupils. An important feature is the increasingly accurate way assessment data is used to pinpoint what the pupils do and do not know, and the teachers are keen to ask the pupils questions and get them involved in the lesson.

The teachers have high expectations. When challenged, pupils show that they have the capacity to learn and enjoy their work. The teaching assistants give invaluable support to teachers and pupils alike and know the children well.

An assessment coordinator has been appointed and, with support from the local authority, has devised a detailed system to find out what the pupils know and do not know, and which plots their progress over the year. Although the system is in its infancy, it is already being used to plan lessons and staff are adding comments to the recording sheets daily. However, there are still inconsistencies in how well the teachers make use of the data, due mainly to their level of confidence. A marking policy is in place, but there are variations in how it is used by the teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and there are no gaps in what should be taught. Nevertheless, the pupils' skills and knowledge are at a much lower level than they should be, which is causing the teachers to modify the curriculum in order that the pupils make progress. Simultaneously, the staff are trying to enrich the curriculum through special events; for example, having weeks devoted to particular subjects such as science and history. A recent history week, based on the Second World War, proved extremely popular both with pupils and parents, and encouraged the pupils to develop skills across a wide range of subjects within an historical context: for example art, design and technology, drama and writing. Such events have encouraged the staff to think and plan a broader curriculum. Currently there are plans to boost opportunities to learn French, and explore musical talent. A continuing weakness, however, is making the best use of provision for information and communication technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is at least satisfactory, with some good features. The school has an air of calm and increasing purpose and the classroom environments are both stimulating and conducive to learning. The pupils are well cared for and encouraged to do their best. There is a significant number of pupils who need a wide range of support from adults to help them manage emotional, social and learning difficulties both in and out of school. The school is working hard to respond effectively to these needs; for example, through drawing together various skilled support workers in an inclusion team. Relationships at all levels have shown steady improvement, especially as adults have gained confidence about providing relevant work for their pupils; there is a growing sense of every child being made to feel they matter. Health and safety issues and adopting healthy lifestyles are less well developed, although

there is a school council and the governors are investigating ways of providing a healthy lunchtime meal option.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, with some good features. The present headteacher, appointed in January 2004, has worked hard to address the school's problems. He is providing effective leadership, particularly in setting the tone for the school, developing relationships at all levels, and boosting morale. The headteacher has systematically addressed staffing and teaching issues. A priority has been to organise the management of major responsibilities amongst the staff team; for example, assessment, special needs, inclusion, and key stage coordination. Nevertheless, there are some important areas for development. The assessment procedures are now in place although their impact is not yet fully informing the planning of work. Coordinators do not undertake a full range of measures to help them evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. The tentative steps taken to broaden the curriculum need to be consolidated.

However, a particular strength of the headteacher is his ability to understand the social and emotional needs of the pupils and for them to feel safe and secure in order that effective learning can take place. The headteacher has achieved considerable success in developing relationships with parents and the community and they are overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the school.

Overall, the leadership and management are displaying the capacity both to sustain and extend the improvements already underway, to continue the school's progress.

The school is given good support by the governing body and by the local authority. The governing body, under the astute leadership of the chair of governors, has increased its involvement with the school and governors regularly visit lessons and offer practical help. They also display an increasing capacity to take decisions based on a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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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	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	4	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	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	4	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	3	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?	2	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	2	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

Lawn Primary School High Street Northfleet Gravesend Kent DA11 9HB

21 November 2005

Dear Children

I would like to say how much I enjoyed spending two days in your school. Thank you for being so polite, friendly and helping me out.

I spent a lot of time finding out how well you are learning by watching you work in some of the lessons and talking to Mr Hickey and your teachers. Didn't they do well keeping up with the actions in the song you sang in Wednesday's assembly? Nearly as good as you! At the end of the inspection I talked to Mr Hickey about what I had found out. This is what I said.

I thought you were very well behaved, all of the time. You listened carefully to your teachers, did as you were asked, and worked hard in your lessons. Even the youngest children in the Nursery were good at taking turns and sharing things. The older children acted responsibly, taking care of books and equipment. You told me that you enjoyed coming to school and that the adults took good care of you. You certainly seemed happy to talk to them about all sorts of things.

One of the jobs I have to do when I inspect schools like yours is to see if there are any things that could make your school even better. Of course, I could only think of one thing that you need to do, because you're brilliant already! Can you guess what it is? Well, it's making sure that you come to school every day. I know you can't help being ill, but Mr Hickey tells me some children are absent when they shouldn't be.

I did make a couple of suggestions for the teachers. I said that they could look a little more at how they find out what you know so they can plan work that really makes you think hard! I also want them to make sure you get even better at your writing and for the ICT suite to work properly all the time.

So keep working hard and enjoying your school. Remember, if I ever come back to Lawn, I'd like to know how you are getting on with my suggestions!

Yours sincerely

Roger Hartley HMI