



# Lucas Vale Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 100695  
**Local Authority** Lewisham  
**Inspection number** 285849  
**Inspection date** 13 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steven Hill

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Thornville Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		SE8 4QB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8692 4660
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	272	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8305 8619
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Rosie Fooks
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Alexandra Hardy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a medium-sized primary school with nursery provision. It is ethnically diverse, with just 16% of pupils from a White British background. About 70% of pupils come from different Black heritages and 10% from Eastern Europe. Pupils' social and economic circumstances are much less favourable than average, with over 50% entitled to free school meals. There is a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. A very high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, with increasing numbers at the early stages of learning English. Mobility is very high, with large numbers of pupils starting school at other than the usual time. Many of these are new to this country and to the English language. The overall attainment of pupils when they start in the school is much lower than that usually found in schools generally.

## 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 and improving school. Pupils of all backgrounds thrive socially and academically in an atmosphere where all pupils are included. The care, support and guidance provided to pupils are outstanding, resulting in a happy, harmonious multi-racial community where pupils know they are valued and enjoy learning. Good leadership and management have resulted in improvements in standards and behaviour in the last two years.

Pupils' achievement is good because of good teaching. Despite low attainment when pupils start, they make good progress, and standards are in line with national averages by the time they leave in Year 6. However, a large proportion of pupils throughout the school still have weaknesses in their speaking and listening skills. Pupils who stay at this school throughout their primary years achieve standards that are above average. Bilingual pupils make good progress in learning English, because of the effective help they are given, based on thorough assessment of their progress. Children who start in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start because of the sensitive support and good teaching they receive in both Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils who arrive at different times, in all year-groups, are also given carefully tailored support to help them settle in happily and achieve well in lessons.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and manage classes well. They work hard to make lessons interesting, so pupils concentrate well and say that learning is fun. Behaviour is good and pupils work hard and take a pride in their achievements. Teachers make good use of practical activities to generate enthusiasm, and pupils work well as part of a team. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills in a structured way.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory, and is enhanced by a range of visitors and visits. There is good provision for extra-curricular clubs, particularly for older pupils. This year the school is experimenting with a new curriculum to make better links between subjects, and to provide more effectively for mixed-age classes. This is not yet complete and its effectiveness has not been assessed.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior colleagues has led to better self-evaluation, which is now good. The information gained, from a more detailed monitoring of teaching quality and pupils' progress, has been used to improve teaching and raise standards. Many middle managers are new to their posts and have not had the opportunity to make an impact on their subjects. They have had little chance to check on provision and standards, in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This is now a priority for the school, which is well poised to improve further, based on its record of improvements to date.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' speaking and listening skills by providing more structured opportunities to develop them in lessons.

- Increase the role of middle managers, particularly in monitoring provision and outcomes in subjects across the curriculum.
- Complete the implementation of the new curriculum structure and evaluate its effectiveness.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In Reception and the Nursery pupils achieve well, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. However, their standards are still well below those normally found by the time they go into Year 1, because of their low starting points. Standards by the end of Year 2 have been below average in reading, writing and mathematics for two years, an improvement following a dip in 2004 when standards were exceptionally low. The current standards represent good progress, particularly as many pupils are still getting to grips with speaking and writing English during Years 1 and 2.

For the last two years, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made good progress by building on the good start in the earlier classes to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. This year, pupils in Year 6 who had been in the school since Reception achieved standards above the national average. Very few failed to reach the expected Level 4, compared to schools nationally.

All pupils achieve well including bilingual pupils, pupils who start at different times and those with learning difficulties or disabilities. This is because of good teaching, and extra help that is carefully targeted on those pupils who need it.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour is good in class and pupils work hard, both individually and collaboratively. Boys and girls from different ethnic groups get on well with each other and with their teachers. Although a few pupils sometimes find it difficult to conform to expected standards of behaviour, this improves as they get older because staff deal firmly and sensitively with any issues. As a result, there is little disruption to learning. In conversation, pupils stressed that behaviour in the playground had improved in recent years and is now good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and were active in pressing for more healthy options for school lunches. They contribute well to the life of the school, particularly through the school council, and play a big part in the local community, as well as further afield, including through supporting charities. They know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils enjoy school, both in lessons and socially and take a pride in their accomplishments. Their good progress in basic skills, good teamwork, and positive attitudes to work stand them in good stead for their future lives, both in education and outside. Although

pupils' attendance is below average, the school is working diligently and successfully to improve this.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour, so that teaching and learning are good. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception draws a good balance between activities directed by the adults, and good opportunities for children to make choices and develop their independence. Here, as in the rest of the school, very good relationships with staff contribute to pupils' confidence and progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons and generally concentrate well on the interesting tasks that teachers give them.

Teachers make good use of the school's vastly improved assessment information to match work carefully to pupils' needs. Effective extra help is given, by both teachers and the highly skilled teaching assistants, to pupils who need it. This includes those who are just learning English, pupils who arrive at different times of year, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is a major factor in their good achievement. Collaborative work is promoted well so that pupils are good at working in teams by the time they reach Year 6. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is currently trying a new plan to make better links between different subjects, and to provide more effectively for mixed-age classes. This is successful in generating interest for pupils and is resulting in lively and engaging lessons. The school has yet to finally formalise the curriculum in writing, and to analyse its effectiveness, particularly in how well it covers all the required strands of different subjects. There is a good range of enrichment activities provided for older pupils, and an increasing number are being provided for the younger classes. The curriculum provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education, and makes good use of pupils' varied backgrounds to enrich the provision for cultural education.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The pastoral care given to pupils is excellent, and is due to be expanded by the appointment of a member of staff to support the emotional development of vulnerable pupils. Systems to keep pupils safe and healthy are well established and effective. Recent improvements in tracking pupils' progress mean that the school is able to provide good academic guidance to individuals, securely based on this information.

This underpins their improving standards and personal development. Extremely good links with other organisations and schools are used well to help pupils succeed.

Extremely good systems are in place to ensure that new pupils are welcomed into school and feel safe, secure, happy and ready to learn. The parent of one recent arrival wrote '...he's really enjoying it ...I've seen some excellent displays of behaviour by many children ...he's coming on in leaps and bounds.' Pupils who arrive at different times receive a thorough and detailed programme to settle them into school and to assess their needs. This underpins their subsequent good progress both academically and socially. The progress for pupils from different minority ethnic groups is monitored carefully, and action taken to help any who fall behind. Careful track is kept of the progress of bilingual pupils in learning English, so that work and extra help can be matched closely to their needs. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is managed well, and their individual education plans are of good quality.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and very good support from the senior leadership team have led to significant improvements in the last two years. Standards have gone up and behaviour has improved. Strengths in pastoral care have been built upon, particularly through the extensive help given to pupils who arrive at different times. This enables them to settle in quickly and make progress. Good self-evaluation underpins the improvements made. Thorough tracking of pupils' achievements has been established and data is used well to identify needs and then to address them. This includes specific help to individuals, as well as addressing issues that affect the whole school. Regular monitoring of teaching by the headteacher has led to helpful feedback, improving the quality of teaching across the school.

A particular strength is the way in which members of the 'inclusion team' work together to address the needs of minority ethnic groups, bilingual pupils, new arrivals and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. This ensures that no one 'slips through the net' and all pupils get the support they need.

All staff work together effectively as a team. As yet, middle managers have not had enough opportunities to monitor progress and to provide support to colleagues, particularly in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The school has identified this as a priority and has sound plans in place to address the issue. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and of the areas that need to develop.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for a warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching at work. This is what I found.

Lucas Vale is a good school, where everyone is made very welcome and you all get on well with each other. Your behaviour is good, and you enjoy school, even though sometimes a few pupils forget themselves and are a little silly. You are making good progress with your work because your teachers are good at helping you to learn. Lessons are interesting and fun. Your teachers are trying out different ways of organising the subjects this year, to make them even more interesting. They need to finish this and to check up on how well it has worked. You have done really well in reading, writing and mathematics in the last few years, but some of you still need to make more progress with your skills in speaking and listening.

All the staff work hard to make sure everyone is looked after really well. They keep a very careful eye on how you are getting on, so they quickly spot if anyone needs extra help, and make sure they get it. The headteacher, governors and all the other staff organise the school well and are always trying to make improvements. They have good systems to see how things are going. Not all the teachers have been able to join in the work to improve things in different subjects, and the school is planning to change this soon.

To get even better, the school needs to

- Give you more chances to improve your speaking and listening skills. You can help by working hard at this.
- Make sure that more teachers have the chance to help in organising the different subjects.
- Finish the new planning for the different subjects, and make sure it is working.

I hope you all carry on enjoying school.

With very best wishes,

Steven Hill

Lead inspector