



Lessness Heath Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101424
Local Authority Bexley
Inspection number 286054
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Erith Road
School category	Community		Belvedere
Age range of pupils	3–11		DA17 6HB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01322 433290
Number on roll (school)	531	Fax number	01322 434212
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Dorothy Schooling
		Headteacher	Mr Adam Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	4–5 December 2006	286054

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lessness Heath Primary is a much larger than average school. Over three quarters of the pupils are from a White British background. Other pupils come from a range of backgrounds with Indian and Black African being the largest groups. The school has a few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. More pupils are eligible for free school meals than average. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is lower than usual. The current headteacher and deputy took up their posts in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lessness Heath Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well and make good progress in their personal development. A good quality education is provided for all pupils. Parents are pleased with the school and praise its atmosphere, the teaching and the approachability of the staff. The school's reputation within the community is growing.

Good leadership and management are the main reason for the school's effectiveness and the good improvements during the past two years. An enthusiastic headteacher provides strong educational direction. He is well supported by the deputy. Under their direction, other leadership roles are developing well and subject leaders are more effectively monitoring and developing their subjects. There have been improvements to assessment, teaching and learning and these have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and standards particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Effective provision in the Foundation Stage helps children in the Nursery and Reception to get off to a good start. They make good progress in all areas of learning. Good teaching and learning, and an interesting and effective curriculum enable pupils to make good progress across the school. The exception to this is that progress in writing in Years 1 and 2 is only satisfactory and not enough pupils attain the higher levels. This is because regular opportunities for pupils to write for extended periods are limited. Standards in Year 6 have improved and are now average. Good assessment means that teachers have a clear picture of what pupils know and can do. They usually use this information well to match work to pupils' abilities and needs so that they are challenged and learn at a good pace. Clear individual learning targets are set so pupils know what they are aiming for. Occasionally, pupils are not challenged enough, pace is lacking and the rate of learning slows. Marking is good and helps pupils to improve.

Good care, guidance and support contribute significantly to pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their needs are carefully assessed and guidance and support for pupils learning English as an additional language, those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the gifted and talented are all good. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now satisfactory. Relationships within the school are good and pupils are courteous and friendly. Clear expectations and a positive school climate give rise to good behaviour. Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing in Years 1 and 2, particularly for the more able, by providing more regular opportunities for pupils to write for extended periods.
- Ensure that all lessons are suitably challenging for pupils and that learning maintains a good pace.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement over time is good. More pupils in Year 6 are now attaining the higher Level 5 in English due to a successful drive to improve writing. The 2006 national test results and the work seen indicate that standards in Year 6 are now average in English, mathematics and science. This represents a significant improvement particularly in English. Weaknesses in provision for writing in Years 1 and 2 account for progress being only satisfactory in these year groups. Across the school, effective support has been established for pupils at an early stage of learning English. This enables these pupils to make good progress and they can participate fully in the activities offered. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of effective provision. A range of interesting initiatives has been introduced to enable gifted and talented to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are happy at school and this is reflected in the improvement in attendance. Behaviour is good and pupils show pride in the recent transformations in the school's environment. The attractive learning environment and harmonious atmosphere contributes to pupils' well-being and spirituality. Pupils show care and concern for the welfare of others. The school council is effective and pupils' suggestions have assisted change. For example, the school council has initiated a 'peer mentoring' scheme, where pupils are trained and supported in helping others. Pupils respect each other and there is both cultural and spiritual celebration of diversity. Older pupils speak confidently and positively about how the school has changed. Pupils engage with charities, visitors, clubs and sports activities. Pupils know how to stay safe and talk knowledgeably about healthy eating, and the need for regular exercise. Pupils are acquiring essential literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. These skills with their good social skills prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations, good subject knowledge and they encourage pupils to work hard. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers make effective use of ICT including visual aids to promote learning in an interesting way. Sometimes though, lesson introductions are too long. Where this happens, the pace of learning slows and does not allow enough time for independent work. The strong focus on discussion work extends pupils' thinking, speaking and listening well.

Learning activities usually meet the needs of pupils well. Teaching assistants give good support to those who need it, so all can make good progress. Occasionally, when work is not well matched to needs, pupils are not challenged enough. For example, writing skills are not sufficiently extended in Years 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the teaching of writing is improving and has contributed to the better standards by in Year 6. Pupils really enjoyed producing 'The Monthly Eagle' newspaper. One said, 'I really like it, you can just write, write, write'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum successfully enables pupils to develop personal skills and to make good progress. Basic skills build up steadily from year to year and there are good links between subjects. There is a clear focus on improving literacy and the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well and is modified carefully for those with learning difficulties, although there are not enough opportunities for extended writing in Years 1 and 2, particularly for the more able pupils. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage provides a wide range of stimulating activities with some very good areas for outdoor play. Effective links with outside agencies, such as 'Learning Through Landscapes' and a good range of clubs, add to pupils' enjoyment and helps them to grow in confidence. Pupils agree that 'Smart Club' allows them to be good ambassadors for their school. Gifted and talented pupils have interesting opportunities to enrich their skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Pastoral care is especially strong, with pupils having the opportunity to share their worries and concerns. The 'Prayer Corner' provides opportunities for pupils of all faiths to engage in prayer and reflection. As one pupil commented, 'It helps us to share the things that upset us and sort them out'. The school does especially well at helping pupils to develop confidence. Children settle quickly in the Foundation Stage and parents confirm that they are happy with the care provided.

Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored closely. Most pupils know their targets for improvement and show a great keenness to succeed in reaching these. Pupils' work is well marked but, sometimes pupils do not respond consistently well to the useful suggestions made by teachers on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers at all levels are successfully promoting good achievement and good personal development. The headteacher and deputy have formed an effective partnership. With staff, they have created a positive and inclusive school atmosphere

for pupils to learn. Teamwork among the staff is strong. A supportive culture and a commitment to continuous improvement pervade the school. The roles of subject leaders have been strengthened significantly since the last inspection. This has contributed to improved provision and has had a positive impact on achievement and standards. As one enthusiastic leader commented, 'The last couple of years have been really exciting'.

Self-evaluation is thorough and the school has a clear view of how well it is doing. Teaching is effectively monitored by senior leaders and the local authority. Good feedback, support and training are helping to ensure that most shortcomings in practice are remedied. Development planning contains appropriate priorities and effective action has brought about improvements. However, the indicators to check the success of the plan are not always sharp enough or measurable. Governors are supportive, well informed and hold the school to account. During the last two years, the school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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 so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed the visit and would like to tell you what we found out. We think that Lessness Heath is a good school and one you can be proud of. There have been many improvements during the past two years.

There are many pleasing features to your school.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and the activities provided.
- You are making good progress because you receive good teaching.
- More pupils in Year 6 are reaching the higher Level 5 in English.
- The school provides a good range of activities which enable you to learn well.
- You are courteous, friendly and your attitudes and behaviour are good.
- The headteacher and deputy run the school well; they are well supported by other senior staff.
- You get on with other pupils and adults.
- Staff know you well; they take good care of you and support you well.
- Your parents are pleased with the school.

There are a few things that could be improved.

- Those of you in Years 1 and 2 could make more progress in writing with regular opportunities to write for longer periods.
- Sometimes your teachers could challenge you more and ensure that the lesson moves on more quickly.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards,

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector