

Lapal Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103797
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	286763
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2007
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Figures
Headteacher	Doug Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Priory Road Halesowen B62 0BZ
Telephone number	01384 818200
Fax number	01384 818201

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lapal is an above average sized primary school. Most pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language but very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and those eligible for free school meals are below average. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is above national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Lapal Primary is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is good and is a strength of the school. Their achievement is satisfactory. Parents generally hold positive views about the school but a significant proportion have concerns about day-to-day communication and they do not feel that the school seeks their views.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and are effectively promoting pupils' personal development. The headteacher and the recently-formed leadership team are focusing their attention on raising pupils' achievement. The monitoring and development of subjects are not fully effective, as a few subject leaders are new to their role. Effective assessment, tracking and target setting systems have been implemented, which mean that teachers have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and pupils have a clear view of what they need to do to improve. The school has identified appropriate priorities for improvement but indicators to measure success in raising achievement in improvement planning are not sufficiently sharp or measurable.

Good care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' good personal development. Most pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance and their keen participation in activities. Pupils are friendly and polite and relate well to others. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating, keeping safe and regular exercise. Older pupils readily take on additional responsibilities to help others in the school.

Children in Reception get off to a sound start because of satisfactory provision. Satisfactory teaching and learning and a sound curriculum enable pupils to make adequate progress overall. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Pupils make good progress when they are challenged and tasks are well matched to their abilities. However, this good practice is not consistent. In a few lessons, pace and challenge are not high enough and the rate of learning slows. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics because there are not enough stimulating and varied opportunities for pupils to acquire and develop writing skills. By Year 6, standards are above average overall but there are variations in standards and progress between subjects. Pupils attain well above average standards in English and make exceptional progress because of highly effective teaching of English in Years 5 and 6 and stimulating opportunities provided, particularly for discussion and writing. Standards in science are only average and pupils' progress is barely adequate because the science curriculum is not sufficiently well developed. In particular, there are insufficient opportunities for investigative work. Standards in mathematics are above average and the effective steps taken to increase problem-solving activities are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy the good range of additional activities which enrich the curriculum.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement writing in Years 1 and 2 by extending the range of writing opportunities, and raise achievement and standards in science in Years 3 to 6 by increasing investigative work.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons have suitable levels of challenge and that learning maintains a brisk pace.
- Ensure that all leaders are effectively monitoring performance and that improvement planning contains clear indicators to measure success in raising pupils' achievement.
- Improve day to day communication between parents and the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Children in Reception make satisfactory gains in all areas of learning. Standards in 2006 in national assessments for Year 2 were above average. They were better in reading and mathematics than in writing. Whilst most pupils by Year 2 produce correctly formed letters of consistent size, even the higher attainers are not writing with a fluent and joined hand. In Year 6, standards are above average overall. They are well above average in English, average in science and above average in mathematics. Those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being because by the time they leave, they possess competent skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). In addition to this, their personal and social skills are well developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and this is reflected in their good attendance and their participation in school activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with moral and social development being particularly strong. Clear expectations by staff and a well-known code of conduct contribute to pupils' good behaviour. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and amongst themselves. They adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Pupils thrive on the opportunities to take on responsibilities such as helping and supporting the younger ones. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community by raising funds for well-known charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with examples of good and outstanding practice evident. Across the school, teachers share learning intentions effectively with the class, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear, although pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to be involved in their learning. The teaching of handwriting skills in Years 1 and 2 is not effective enough in prompting fluent and joined writing. Enthusiastic and inspirational teaching of English in Years 5 and 6 contributes to pupils' exceptional progress. Pupils have outstanding opportunities to discuss and write about an interesting range of topics. When teachers use assessment information effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are suitably challenged and make good gains in their learning. In a few lessons, the level of challenge is not appropriate and the rate of learning slows. Not all lessons proceed at a brisk pace. For example, overlong introductions can slow the pace and flow of learning. Teaching assistants are usually well directed and contribute

well to pupils' learning, particularly that of pupils with learning difficulties. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful and constructive, especially in English and mathematics. The quality of marking in science is less consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well and enables them to make satisfactory academic progress. Whilst writing is a priority for improvement in Years 1 and 2, this area does not have a high profile in terms of display, and the range of writing opportunities is insufficient. By contrast, opportunities for writing in Years 3 to 6 are stimulating and varied. Problem-solving activities in mathematics have been increased and this is having a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment and progress. There are insufficient opportunities for practical work in the science curriculum in Years 3 to 6 and this is why pupils make less progress in science than they do in English and mathematics. Significant improvements have been made to ICT provision since the last inspection and this is used effectively to support teaching and learning. There is a good range of additional activities which contribute to pupils' enjoyment and interests. Provision for sport is particularly strong and effectively supports the leading of healthy lifestyles. A 'Get Cooking' club also encourages healthy eating. A good range of day and residential visits extend pupils' experience and knowledge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective so pupils are safe and secure at school. Staff know the pupils well and have established good relationships with them. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are good. Assessment information is generally used well to set suitably challenging individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils know what they are working towards in these subjects. There are plans to extend target-setting to science and ICT. Older pupils appreciate and value the meetings they have with their teachers to discuss their progress. As one commented, 'You can have teacher meetings about your work'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are at a developmental stage following the formation of a new leadership team. Leadership and management have been successful in providing effective care, guidance and support and in promoting pupils' personal development. The impact of leadership in terms of promoting teaching and learning and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory and most parents are generally satisfied with the care and education provided. A number of parents would like more information about what is going on in the school. The school has not been effective enough in finding ways of seeking the views of parents. As a result, a significant proportion feel that the school takes insufficient account of their suggestions and concerns.

Some of the school's judgements about its own performance are too generous because there has not been sufficient focus on inconsistencies in pupils' achievement between subjects.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. A few subject leaders are new to their posts and their role in monitoring and evaluating performance is not effective enough. Improvement planning correctly identifies the school's most pressing priorities, such as raising achievement in writing in Years 1 and 2 and improving science provision in Years 3 to 6. Criteria to measure the success of the planning in terms of raising pupils' achievement are not precise or measurable enough.

Governors are committed and supportive but are not sufficiently challenging about pupils' achievement and the progress of planned improvements. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained pupils' good personal development and has made good improvements to provision and progress in ICT. High standards in English by Year 6 have been maintained.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Lapal Primary School, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 0BZ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. Lapal is a satisfactory school, with clear strengths in your personal development. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

These things were strengths of the school:

- you clearly enjoy school and your attendance is good
- standards in English in Year 6 are high and you make exceptional progress in this subject
- the teaching of English in Years 5 and 6 is particularly good
- you are friendly and polite
- you get on well with other pupils and adults
- a good range of additional activities and clubs is provided
- your behaviour is good in and around the school
- staff know you well; they take good care of you and give you good support.

These are the things the school has been asked to improve:

- some of you could make more progress in writing in Years 1 and 2 and in science in Years 3 to 6
- sometimes your teachers could challenge you more and this would help you to make more progress
- your headteacher, staff and governors should check really closely the success of all the improvements they make
- the school could improve communication with your parents.

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

With kind regards

Derek Watts

Lead inspector