

Lexden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114707
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290005
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	148
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Pearson
Headteacher	Ms Carole Farrer
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Trafalgar Road Colchester Essex CO3 9AS
Telephone number	01206573519
Fax number	01206763179

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over two days.

Description of the school

Nearly all pupils are White British. More than an average number have recognised learning difficulties and the majority of these are boys. Children's attainment on entry is below that typical of children nationally and in some years is well below. The number starting school or leaving other than at the usual times is above average.

The school has separately resourced provision for 18 hearing impaired pupils, all of whom have a statement of special educational need. In total, those with learning difficulties represent more than a third of all pupils. Whenever possible hearing impaired pupils are taught in the primary school, although specialist teaching also takes place in the Hearing Impaired Unit.

The school has, by its own initiative, joined the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme. Since November 2005 the school has participated, along with 6 other primary schools, in a Primary School Learning Network focusing on children's learning power and mathematical thinking. The school provides a variety of courses for parents. It was awarded Zone Parc Status for sports provision in 2006 and in the same year received the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school providing excellent value for money. Pupils have benefited enormously from the concerted efforts of school leaders, governors and the staff to improve educational provision and raise standards. The headteacher's resolute and outstanding leadership has meant a very sharp focus on every pupil making as much progress as they possibly can, whether they have high capability or otherwise. In essence, the quality of understanding and response to the wide range of pupils' needs has meant exceptional success for the school, particularly in combating, for significant numbers, low attainment, low educational aspirations or learning difficulties. There has been considerable success in getting parents closely involved, especially through a range of pertinent workshops provided by the staff. The support for pupils is excellent and their personal development, around a healthy lifestyle and staying safe in particular, is outstanding. The school is very inclusive, giving every pupil an excellent opportunity to learn. Children in the Foundation Stage, pupils with learning difficulties and the significant number of pupils with hearing impairments fit in extremely well, as do the small number of minority ethnic pupils.

The school's aims and values are made very explicit to all involved. In assemblies pupils sing, full of conviction, the school song extolling positive sentiments of being a team and working hard. The highest expectations are established in school routines and through exceptionally good relationships. The corridors, classrooms and outside spaces have all been very carefully considered for their educational impact and they stimulate in pupils, through displays and resources, high levels of enjoyment and interest. A good curriculum has many additional activities to keep pupils busy and involved well beyond the school day. While many learning opportunities are well attuned to pupils' needs and interests, including in the Foundation Stage, the opportunities for pupils to learn to swim are too few.

Educational improvements and high expectations are driving up standards. Higher attaining pupils do well, scoring in 2006 above average for higher levels in mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average, the same as those of the previous year, only this class started out in Year 3 at a much lower level (well below average) thus making huge progress. Their achievement is excellent as a result. This gives a clear demonstration of the exceptional quality of teaching and learning taking place. While pupils' standard of writing is below average, the progress made is nevertheless good. They will move to secondary school exceedingly well prepared to continue their progress. Pupils with hearing impairments have excellent and very expert support in the Unit and across school. This helps them acquire the communication skills, experience and self-confidence to contend with school and to make exceptional progress.

There is very considerable sharpness to leadership and management across the school, largely as a result of rigorous and accurate monitoring of the school's work. A very detailed picture of the school's performance, especially around pupils' progress, is used exceedingly effectively to focus improvements in teaching and learning in particular.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by maintaining the sharp focus on pupils' performance and ensuring initiatives to improve learning in writing are implemented effectively.
- Provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn to swim.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards have improved substantially since the last inspection, when mathematics and science were well below average. Higher standards reflect the positive impact of the headteacher in raising pupils' achievement, which is now outstanding. In 2006, standards were average in mathematics and science. They were well below in English because of the high proportion of pupils in that year with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, 2006 results underlined the good progress pupils made.

Current indications in pupils' work and in the school's rigorous tracking of pupils' performance show standards in English, mathematics and science are all broadly average. However, the current Year 6 had lower starting points than last year's Year 6, although they are achieving the same standards, demonstrating they have made outstanding progress in reading and mathematics in particular. Even though writing standards are lower, compared to these pupils' low starting points in Year 3, they have made good progress in writing. Children in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress from their starting points. As a result of excellent support, pupils with learning difficulties across the school, including those with hearing impairments make exceptional progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show a high awareness of healthy eating through healthy school lunches and lessons. They willingly engage in the wide range of opportunities to stay physically fit, both in the curriculum and through sporting extra curricular activities. Pupils' behaviour is extremely good. They enjoy school exceptionally well and attendance is good. Pupils make a good contribution to school life and to the wider community. There are good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility and the school council is contributing well in this respect. If ever pupils feel concerned, there is no shortage of people to approach for help. With excellent progress in literacy and numeracy and by gaining a good grasp of financial responsibility through the savings club, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for secondary school and the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Exceptionally skilled teaching across the school produces lessons that are extremely lively and interesting for all pupils. Pupils learn enthusiastically, work hard and help each other, which has an exceptional effect on their progress. Teachers and classroom assistants know pupils extremely well because of thorough assessments of their needs. Lessons are planned very effectively and work is well matched to every pupil's capabilities. The pace of learning is brisk and expectations are high, with pupils responding exceedingly well to demands. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with hearing impairments are made very much a part of every lesson. Teachers and their assistants provide considerable support that ensures these pupils learn very effectively. Well planned activities in the Foundation Stage mean children are supported very well in learning to communicate effectively. The specialist teaching in the hearing impaired unit, because of high quality planning, assessment and target setting, is

sharply focused on pupils' developing good communication skills. Learning is highly effective and the exceptional progress hearing impaired pupils make contributes significantly to them succeeding in lessons elsewhere in the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum planning is effective in meeting the wide range of pupils' needs, including those of pupils with learning difficulties and hearing impairments. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, as it creates a good balance across the areas of learning so that children improve their communication and personal skills. There are well planned links between literacy, information and communication technology and other subjects. These help make learning meaningful and, in particular, strengthen the development of writing. The curriculum gives careful consideration to making learning, particularly writing, more interesting to boys through projects such as 'cineliteracy'. There is a good level of curriculum enrichment such as visits out of school, visitors into school and themed weeks, all of which add enjoyment and relevance to pupils' learning. Pupils have too few opportunities to learn to swim. A good range of extra curricular activities provide further opportunities for pupils to extend their learning, making sure that there is always something provided to meet each pupil's preferences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care and support for pupils' personal development. Any hint from pupils of low aspirations is quickly banished by the school's powerful ethos encouraging good attendance, hard work and achievement. All staff are very aware and vigilant concerning pupils' safety. Pupils receive excellent guidance to support their progress in lessons. Marking identifies what pupils do well and comments clearly on what they need to do to improve. In addition, well chosen targets in English and mathematics are highly effective in motivating pupils and ensure they know what they are aiming for. In Years 5 and 6, pupils play a good part in assessing their own progress and value this because it really helps them keep achievement firmly in mind.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership of the headteacher has been outstanding in raising standards and driving school improvement. Her very clear vision and strong direction has reinforced the whole school's commitment towards every pupil achieving their best. The high quality of inclusion experienced by hearing impaired pupils and the many with other learning difficulties is typical of the school's very positive outlook. The staff work extremely well as a team and take their responsibilities for standards very seriously. Leadership roles knit together exceptionally well. These are defined clearly and focus very effectively on the main aspects of the school's work and development. Excellent partnerships, with parents in particular, are ensuring all pupils' needs are met and that the school's continues its rapid development. Governors stay very closely in touch with how the school is doing and lend considerable weight to ensuring the school achieves success.

The substantial improvement so far and the exceptional capacity for further improvement demonstrated, owes much to rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The

tracking and analysis of pupils' performance enables leaders to set challenging benchmarks for achievement, which are being met. Where pupils' performances fall short of the school's expectations, as in writing standards, decisive action has been taken to remedy this.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

29 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lexden Primary School, Trafalgar Road, Colchester, CO3 9AS

Thank you for your very warm welcome when we visited to inspect your school. We were really pleased, and incredibly impressed, by how happy you all are at school and how exceptionally well you are making progress.

These are the things we found best about your school.

- It is outstanding in the way that it supports you and helps you to learn and make progress.
- The governors, the headteacher and all of the staff are determined your school will give you the best education there is.
- You make excellent progress because you work hard at everything your teachers encourage you to do.
- You enthusiastically take part in and thoroughly enjoy all of the activities the school provides.
- You all behave exceptionally well and are very kind and helpful to each other.
- All of the staff look after you extremely well and keep you safe.

This is what we have asked your headteacher to do to improve your school:

- to do all that is possible to raise the standard of your writing to the same level you reach in reading, mathematics and science
- provide you with better opportunities to learn and develop your swimming.

We greatly appreciated your friendliness and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead Inspector