



The Len Wastell Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114808
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290039
Inspection date 22 February 2007
Reporting inspector George Falconer HMI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	High Road
School category	Community		Pitsea, Basildon
Age range of pupils	4-7		Essex SS13 3AB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 553547
Number on roll (school)	115	Fax number	01268 556906
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Harris
		Headteacher	Miss L M Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4-7	22 February 2007	290039

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Len Wastell Infant School is a well established community school situated in an urban environment on the outskirts of Basildon. There is a mixed catchment of private and association housing. There are 37% of pupils eligible for free school meals and 20% of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. A few of the school population are from minority ethnic groups. The school shares a site with Pitsea Junior School.

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 school with some outstanding features. It cares for its pupils and makes a real difference to their lives. This is due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher.

Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with levels of ability often below and sometimes well below those found nationally. The high level of expertise of the headteacher, combined with the robust level of support from experienced staff is used to quickly assess pupils' needs. The school then provides appropriate learning experiences that are relevant to their developing needs.

Pupils' basic skills are progressively nurtured and their achievements by the end of Year 1 are good. They continue to make good progress in Year 2 and by the time they are assessed at the end of the year, achievement is good and their levels of attainment are in line with and sometimes just above the national averages. Much of this is due to the strategic work of the senior management team. The school has purpose and knows its strengths as well as those areas to develop further.

The school is working really hard with strategies to increase the achievement of boys so that the attainment gap between girls and boys is narrowed. It is also well aware of the need to develop further strategies to improve the attendance figures of some of the pupils so that they are more in line with the national averages.

The personal development and well being of the pupils are outstanding and they say how much they enjoy being at school. They adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices and say how much they enjoy lessons. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Pupils have really good friendships with each other and think their teachers are really hard working and great. They feel very well supported.

The quality of teaching is good with stimulating lessons being observed during the course of the inspection. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and attitudes to learning are good. The curriculum is well balanced with a good emphasis on pupils being happy and keeping healthy and safe.

Care guidance and support are outstanding and a strength of the school. Pupils are extremely well cared for. They are also well guided and well supported in their learning. The school monitors pupils' progress extremely well and appropriate intervention strategies are quickly put into place wherever necessary.

This is a happy and successful school that supports its pupils well. It gives good value for money and demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the school continues to develop relevant strategies to raise standards further and to narrow the gap between boys' attainment and that of girls.
- Make sure that strategies for raising attendance are further developed with the support of parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good in this school where pupils enter the Foundation Stage with lower than average abilities in many areas of learning including literacy, mathematics and creative development. Many pupils also have difficulties in both social and communication skills on entry. They quickly settle down to enjoy school and make good progress towards their challenging targets in the Reception class and in Year 1. The school makes good use of its strategies for supporting all pupils including those who are underachieving and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Good use is made of software to analyse assessments and to evaluate trends in progress. In this way, the school plans ahead to meet the needs of all pupils. An example of this is the way the school is putting in a lot of work to develop strategies that encourage boys' reading and writing in order that they are able to achieve attainment levels closer to those of the girls.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Year 2 and by the time they are assessed at the end of the year, achievement is good and their levels of attainment are in line with and sometimes just above national averages. By the end of Year 2, pupils demonstrate good levels of achievement from their low starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well being are outstanding. Much emphasis is placed on helping pupils to enjoy their learning and on promoting healthy lifestyles. The school has just been re-accredited as a 'Healthy School'. There is a breakfast club that provides well for the pupils. They really do enjoy their time in school and say how much they appreciate the support given to them from their teachers and assistants. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development runs through the curriculum and is outstanding. A great deal of emphasis is also placed on integrating the community into the school and the school into the community. Pupils feel safe and secure and know they can turn to an adult if they have any problems. They are encouraged to help themselves in their development and the school council does much to involve pupils in the decision making process. For example, they regularly evaluate the school menus when considering healthy eating. This kind of activity helps them to develop ideas and to prepare well for their future lives. There is a 'friendship bench' and a 'no worries box' that pupils can use if they feel the need. Good use is made of the gym trail and the outdoor play equipment by the pupils and the after school clubs and activities support them well in their learning about healthy lifestyles. One Year 2 pupil requested that the report included the fact that 'this school is the best, and not to forget it'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and accounts for the good progress pupils make as they move through the school. Teachers know the pupils well and plan the lessons thoroughly to accommodate all pupils' needs. Teaching is often lively and engaging and the level of response from the pupils is good. Communication is good between teachers and pupils, and pupils show a firm understanding of what they should do. As a result, they make good progress. They talk confidently about their work and many of the older pupils are aware of their targets. Teachers encourage pupils to be independent in their learning and pupils show that they can work well on their own as well as in teams. Teaching assistants play an important role in the classroom and the level of professional development support given to them by the leadership and management pays dividends in terms of the overall achievement of the pupils. Their work is seen as an important part of the pupils' social and emotional development by the school. More attention on the boys and the way they learn is now a key area for the school to develop.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and other activities are good. They are relevant to the needs of the pupils as they progress through the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced and supports the development of the pupils' basic skills in interesting ways that engage them in their learning. Pupils enjoy their work and can talk with a sense of purpose about their learning. They fully understand about the personal, social and health education elements of learning that play a large part in their development. These are well planned and appear across various elements of the curriculum. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported as illustrated in the individual education plans. As a result pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. The curriculum also gives good support to high achieving pupils and those who are gifted and talented. The school is now placing more emphasis on ideas to stimulate learning in boys.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. All child protection procedures are in place and there is an experienced child protection officer to make sure that the school complies with all regulations. There is a regular review of procedures. The school ensures that health and safety checks are carried out by a trained, designated person and the school provides a safe physical environment. Pupils say they feel well cared for in the school and this is borne out by a survey carried just recently. All pupils are well catered for in terms of their social and emotional needs as well as in all areas of

learning. Outstanding and regular monitoring by staff ensures that the curriculum is suited to the needs of the pupils and the school makes sure that older pupils know their targets well. Assessment in relation to learning is outstanding. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's education, including the regular provision of homework.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good with some outstanding features. The teamwork amongst the staff and the degree to which they take on their responsibilities are testimony to the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher. The main thrust of the school is to provide the best education possible for all pupils and the strong senior management team do a good job in supporting and driving the ideas forward.

Impact of this can be seen in the end of Year 2 results and the progress that pupils make from low starting points. The ethos of the school puts a great deal of emphasis on providing a caring environment where all pupils are nurtured and very well supported in their work.

The governing body has a firm role in the leadership and management of the school and is a good critical friend to the headteacher. The school is always questioning its own practice and is well supported in this by external agencies including the Local Authority. It knows its areas of strength as well as its areas to develop very well. New, inexperienced members of staff are well supported and their ideas are often incorporated into the school curriculum. The school is growing in strength and parents wrote in to say how much they valued the school with one parent writing, 'we have so much faith in this school's capabilities... this is a very good school'.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	1
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?	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.

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	1
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

23 February 2007

Dear Children

The Len Wastell Infant School, High Road, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex, SS13 3AB

I am writing to thank you very much for all the help you gave to me when I visited your school recently. I spent a very enjoyable day with you and I learned a lot about your school and the way that it works really hard to make your lessons interesting and exciting.

You told me that your teachers are really good and that they really care about you and your learning. You all feel that you are doing well and that the majority of you are making good progress. You also feel safe in school and feel you are able to talk to an adult if you have any problems.

I was particularly impressed with the way in which you took a pride in your work with many of the older pupils knowing their next steps for learning. Many of you were able to tell me very clearly about what interested you most.

Your headteacher also told me of the many good things about the school which I could also see for myself during my visit. There is no doubt that she is an excellent headteacher with a lot of experience.

Miss Higgins is pleased with most things but wants to make the curriculum even more interesting to everyone, boys as well as girls. You can help with suggestions. She also wants to make sure that you all attend school as much as possible in term time so that you can learn lots. Not being at school can mean that you are missing out on important things and sometimes it can be difficult to catch up.

Thank you for making my visit so enjoyable.

Best wishes

George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector