

Latchingdon CE (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115121
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290140
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	135
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne-Marie Garrigan
Headteacher	Miss Margaret Amery
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	The Street Latchingdon Chelmsford Essex CM3 6JS
Telephone number	01621 740328
Fax number	01621 743811

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which serves the semi-rural villages of Latchingdon and Althorne. Pupils come from a mix of private and social housing. Pupils are predominantly from a White cultural heritage. Of the few pupils from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds none speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost a third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. This is significantly higher than average. Significant fluctuations in pupil numbers over the past few years have led to the reorganisation of pupils into mixed-age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Until recently, it did not have sufficiently robust systems and structures to maintain the momentum of improvement, which led up to the previous inspection. As a result, standards fell steadily from 2002 to 2004. Recent initiatives to improve the effectiveness of senior leaders have had a positive impact. Consequently, pupils' progress is improving and standards and achievement are satisfactory.

There are significant differences between cohorts but pupils generally enter the school with below average attainment in all areas of learning. Good provision in the Reception year ensures that they make steady progress and attain standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage. The majority of pupils maintain a satisfactory rate of progress so that by the end of Years 2 and 6 standards are broadly average. However, progress in science is slower for some pupils, particularly for those who are more able and those with learning difficulties. Consequently, standards overall remain lower than when the school was last inspected.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school's focus on improving the quality of teaching has arrested the decline in standards in English and mathematics. Teaching is becoming increasingly effective and much of it is good. Nevertheless, there is too little good and outstanding teaching, which extends pupils and inspires them to exceed expectations. In addition, science has not been given the same impetus as English or mathematics, leading to the slower progress in this subject.

The curriculum is satisfactory and pupils enjoy what they say is a mixture of 'fun and hard' lessons. However, the school is yet to complete its review of the curriculum in line with the reorganisation of pupils into mixed-age classes and to ensure that the needs of boys and of potentially gifted or talented pupils are adequately met.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The establishment of robust tracking systems have provided leaders with a clearer understanding of pupils' progress. Leaders are now able to identify and tackle any underachievement earlier and are already beginning to see the impact of their work in this area. Nevertheless, systems for evaluating the impact of the school's work are still not rigorous enough and data is not always used most effectively to identify key priorities for improvement or to target resources more efficiently.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils feel safe and emotionally secure because of the good care, guidance and support they receive. They behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. However, although growing in confidence, many lack the necessary oral skills to enable them to articulate their thoughts effectively.

The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money and its capacity to improve further is also satisfactory.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Improve pupils' speaking skills and raise the achievement of the more able pupils, particularly in science.
- Ensure that the impact of initiatives is evaluated rigorously, and the information used effectively, to identify sharply focused priorities for improvement.
- Review the curriculum to ensure that it fully meets the needs of mixed-age classes, boys and pupils who are gifted or talented.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The 2006 national test results showed that at the end of Year 2, standards were broadly average in all subjects, although boys' achievement was significantly lower than girls'. At the end of Year 6, standards were slightly above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. However, whilst progress in English and mathematics was satisfactory, in science it was not. In addition, pupils with learning difficulties did significantly less well than the same group nationally and speaking skills are weak throughout the school.

Nevertheless, the progress of the majority of pupils is now at least satisfactory and the school has put in place appropriate strategies to help those who find learning hard to catch up. Current data shows that the latter are making satisfactory progress and the school now maintains a close overview of standards and provision for this group. Pupils achieve well in other areas of the curriculum, such as in information and communication technology (ICT), swimming and art.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral and social development. Their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and with adults. The teaching fosters good collaboration skills which enable pupils to work independently and sensibly in pairs and in small or large groups. Pupils have a good understanding of health and safety issues, which pupils demonstrate, for example, by bringing healthy snacks to school for fruit break. Frequent fundraising activities develop pupils' enterprise skills and enable them to make a positive contribution to the wider community. Pupils have a number of duties within the school and so their contribution to the school community is satisfactory. Pupils learn about different countries once a year. However, this is not often enough and, along with the lack of diversity among the school population, means that pupils' understanding of other cultures in modern Britain is not as strong as it could be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good features evident in some lessons. Teaching is most effective in the Foundation Stage, where activities are matched carefully to the needs and abilities of all pupils. Lessons have clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils.

Most lessons are structured satisfactorily and have the necessary pace to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Resources, including interactive white boards and DVDs, are used effectively to aid teaching and to motivate pupils, especially boys. As a result, pupils are eager to learn, pay attention in class and work diligently. To improve their speaking skills, pupils are provided with many opportunities to talk about their learning but this strategy has yet to impact on standards throughout school. Effective teaching and support is improving the progress of pupils with learning difficulties. Lesson plans now identify many appropriate activities for pupils who find learning hard. However, there is still not enough good and outstanding teaching to challenge or extend the more able pupils. Staff regularly check how well pupils are doing in mathematics, English and ICT but the school does not yet have robust systems for checking progress in science and other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The reorganisation of all classes into mixed-age groups has presented the need to review the curriculum to ensure that pupils do not repeat or miss aspects of their learning. The school has not yet completed this process and therefore does not have a sufficient overview of the detail of what is to be taught in each year group. The basic curriculum is satisfactory in most respects, although the low profile of science contributes to the underachievement in this area. Moreover, the school is still at the early stages of devising additional opportunities that motivate boys or that extend pupils identified as gifted or talented. Much work has been done recently to ensure that any pupils who are lagging behind their peers, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are identified and provided with the support they need to progress as well as others in the class.

The wide range of clubs and sports include netball, cricket and snorkelling. The school uses its links with other schools effectively to enhance the curriculum, for example through fortnightly French lessons provided by staff of the local secondary school. Pupils enjoy these language lessons and wish that there were more of them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are appropriate policies and systems to safeguard pupils' welfare and safety. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, although some pupils do present challenging behaviour, most of them behave well. Pupils report that there is hardly any bullying, and that when it occurs, staff deal with it effectively. Although the school promotes racial harmony and racist incidents are rare, more could be done to improve pupils' understanding of the different cultures they come across.

The school provides good support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. It engages effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that the needs of these pupils are fully met. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school, although a few have concerns over the behaviour of a small minority of pupils. The school has also worked hard to improve the quality of the feedback that all pupils receive. Older pupils report that they are given clear guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the past, weak evaluation procedures have contributed to a slow pace of improvement. However, senior leaders now have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are taking effective action to bring about improvement. Subject leaders are making a more effective contribution to school improvement planning because they are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring standards. This has led to a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, although school has only just begun to use its performance data effectively to direct the focus of such initiatives. Nevertheless, this strengthening of management structures gives the school a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Governors are informed and supportive. They ensure that the school meets statutory requirements. However, they do not have a sufficient understanding of the school's performance data and this limits their ability to challenge school leaders effectively.

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Latchingdon Church of England (VC) Primary School, Latchingdon, Essex, CM3 6JS

Thank you for spending some time talking to me during my recent visit to your school. I enjoyed listening to what you had to say and this letter is to let you know what I found out about your school.

Your school is satisfactory. The teaching helps many of you to do well in your work although some of you could do even better, particularly in science. The adults are good at looking after you. They check how well you are doing regularly and they are trying to help those of you who are a little behind in your work to catch up.

I was impressed by how well most of you behave, the way you all work together in lessons and the good attention you pay to what your teachers tell you. Your attendance is good and you told me you enjoy your lessons, the different sports, and other activities on offer.

To help your school to be better, I have asked the staff to:

- make sure that the teaching in your school is the best so that all of you can do as well as you possibly could
- help you to improve your speaking skills and help those of you who are able to work a little harder to do better, particularly in science
- check that the things they do to improve the school are really working and that they use that information to decide what else needs to be done
- look at their plans for what work you will cover in all the subjects every year to make sure it is right for all of you.

I hope your parents will continue to support the school and that you will all work hard to achieve your very best.

I wish you all well.

Florence Olajide

Lead inspector