

Linden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115483
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	290237
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Mo Roberts HMI

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	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Fay
Headteacher	Angela Jarvis
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Linden Road Gloucester GL1 5HU
Telephone number	01452 527020
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school serves the Linden area of the City of Gloucester. This mixed community includes some socially disadvantaged areas as well as some with private housing. The proportion of pupils having free school meals is above average. A fifth of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The number learning English as an additional language has increased recently and there are also more children joining and leaving the school at non-standard times. On entry to school, children generally perform below nationally expected levels. A children's centre has been added to the school site since the last inspection. This has its own manager who is line-managed by the school's headteacher.

The school was placed in the category of 'serious weaknesses' when it was inspected in December 2004 but a monitoring visit in June 2005 judged that it was making 'reasonable progress' in remedying these.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Linden is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. The determined efforts of the headteacher have resulted in raised expectations amongst both staff and pupils. The school now has a calm atmosphere, well-behaved pupils and an exciting curriculum. Pupils like coming to school and are proud of their work. Presentation is good and classrooms have high quality work displayed; topics engage pupils and extend their learning. Most pupils are aware of their personal targets and, although these remain below the expected national levels in both key stages, satisfactory progress is being made on them. Pupils enjoy their learning and are attentive in lessons. The pace of learning is improving but some year groups in the middle of the school still have a lot of work to make up. This is because of some previous weak teaching and the consequent gaps in their knowledge, especially in relation to mathematics.

Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all classes. In the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress despite their entry level skills. Year 6 pupils are making rapid gains, especially in their literacy skills, due to the good teaching and the stimulating work their teachers provide for them. In some classes, and especially in mathematics, information on pupils' progress is not used to ensure that pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged to do their best. Pupils are well cared for and are learning about healthy lifestyles and how to make informed decisions. They feel safe in school and are increasingly taking responsibility within the school community. A persistent minority of pupils are still late in the mornings. The incentive scheme has improved attendance but levels are still below the national average.

A good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities encourage pupils to broaden their interests and to try new things. The school rules are clear to all and good behaviour and hard work are rewarded by the popular idea of 'Golden Time' where pupils can select their preferred activity. Schemes such as this have encouraged pupils to feel more confident and to strive to improve their work. There are some excellent examples displayed relating to the theme of the Tudors. Pupils were enthused sufficiently to undertake extra homework on this topic. A stronger partnership with parents is now evident as parents feel better informed about what pupils are learning and how to support them. The headteacher and governors have dealt with difficult issues unflinchingly and demonstrate a strong capacity for future development.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards, especially in mathematics, by developing teaching standards so that more lessons are good or better and pupils are challenged to learn as rapidly as they can
- increase pupils' attendance rates and their punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory but standards, which are currently below the national average, still reflect a legacy of previous underachievement. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment which are often well below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, their skills are still below national expectations on entering Year 1, particularly in communication and literacy. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in national tests in 2006 were still significantly below the national average although there were many pupils who had made rapid progress over the previous year. The use of target setting and the tracking of each pupil's

progress are successfully raising achievement in the present classes. Data analysis identified girls' under-achievement and this has been rectified. Revised curriculum planning focuses on raising standards through a creative curriculum underpinned by the teaching of specific literacy, numeracy and scientific skills. This approach impacts positively on progress, particularly in Year 6 where it is good. Pupils are aware of areas for improvement and are involved in discussing their own progress. Pupils strive to meet the realistic targets set for them. Pupils with learning difficulties or English as an additional language make sound progress because of the good quality support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and their parents confirm this. As one pupil commented, 'This school challenges you'. Pupils are well behaved. They appreciate the value of working in teams and compete through the school's house point system to gain points for good work and behaviour. The 'star of the day' system raises pupils' self-esteem. Pupils say that the school listens to them and values their ideas. They have confidently raised money for charities, purchased playground equipment with money they have raised and tried to improve the playground environment. Pupils get on well together. They know what is right and wrong and are clear that bullying is unacceptable. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They feel very safe at school. Work has started on promoting healthy eating at lunchtime and the pupils show a developing understanding of what is needed to keep fit and healthy. They enjoy the range of sports and after-school activities provided by the school, and the new 'huff and puff' scheme gives an opportunity for the older pupils to take responsibility for younger ones. Attendance is below the national average. The school works hard to promote the importance of regular attendance, but this drive has been hindered by limited support from the local authority, due to extended staff illness, and has not yet been fully effective. The school is now working with the children's centre to try a joint approach to families causing concern in this respect.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and there is some that is good. Good teaching is well linked to the creative curriculum and is exciting and encourages pupils to do their very best. Where teaching is good, there is also a brisk pace to lessons and teachers design appropriate challenges for pupils of all abilities. In the satisfactory lessons, there is a tendency for teachers to have too long an introduction to the lesson and not to involve pupils actively enough to fully develop their learning. Relationships are positive in all classes and behaviour is consistently well managed. In all lessons, teachers provide a clear focus at the start of lessons and end by summarising and consolidating learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those who do not have English as a first language are supported in class and, as a result, make the same steady progress as the other pupils. The teaching of literacy skills is improving and is beginning to have a noticeable impact on pupils' progress. Mathematics lessons are consistently well organised across the classes but there is more to be done to ensure that all groups of pupils are fully challenged in every class. Whilst there are some examples of assessment being used well to match work to pupils' differing

needs, assessment is not used consistently to ensure that planned activities build sufficiently on all pupils' prior knowledge. As a consequence, in some classes a few pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable. Marking helps pupils know if what they have done is correct and often offers encouragement but it does not always identify sufficiently the next steps for pupils. This means pupils do not always get enough information about how they can improve their work and attain at a higher level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Described as unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, the curriculum is now good. A robust change to the curriculum, driven by two visionary key stage coordinators, has led to innovative planning. It is focused on developing cross-curricular links between subjects to make learning more relevant, purposeful and enjoyable. This approach is underpinned by teaching key skills and clearly focuses on raising standards, especially pupils' writing. Its impact is particularly seen in the current work and good achievement of the older pupils, but the impact on standards in mathematics has been held back by the quality of planning and teaching in some lessons. Pupils are enthused by themed days and weeks, role-play, and visits and visitors to the school. As one pupil said, 'It makes learning more interesting'. A wide range of after-school activities further enriches the curriculum. Planned personal and social programmes, including a residential visit, promote very successfully pupils' understanding of being healthy and safe as well as doing much to develop their self-confidence and responsibility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure at all times. Child protection procedures, including staff training, are secure and pupils are confident that they can seek help and advice from teachers and other adults when they need it. Pupils with learning difficulties are well catered for by the special educational needs coordinator, teachers and experienced teaching assistants. The school works increasingly well with parents and other agencies to ensure that all learners make at least sound progress.

Most teachers monitor pupils' progress within their class effectively. They are good at involving older pupils in evaluating their own progress towards the targets set for them to improve. These new self-assessment procedures need time to become embedded and to have a full impact on raising standards. Parents recognise and appreciate the high level of care and support. One parent commented, 'I am proud my children attend Linden Primary School'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has shown strong and determined leadership. She monitors the quality of teaching and dealt promptly with the previous issues of underperformance. Staff performance agreements are now effectively linked to pupils' progress and, as a result, teachers' expectations have been raised and standards in the current classes are rising. Senior staff have been selected carefully and now work as a strong management team to help lead the school, support newer staff and model good practice. Staff

are clear about the national expectations for levels and standards and are increasingly striving to get pupils to reach them. Governance is satisfactory. Governors take an active interest in school developments and have recently canvassed pupils' opinions on various aspects of the school. They now take a more 'hands on' approach to understanding pupils' performance data and its implications for further developments. They are increasingly able to offer constructive challenge to the school's leaders. The school's strategic planning is good and has ensured strong improvement since the last inspection, but it is inhibited by the constantly fluctuating pupil numbers and the arrival of pupils from across the city in the school at short notice and without an increase in funding.

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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?	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	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?	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	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	3
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?	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.

Annex A

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	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

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome when we came to visit your school this week. You were very polite and friendly and we enjoyed looking at all that you do in school. We found that the school is now satisfactory and improving, and that:

- you enjoy learning and most of you try hard to do your best
- you know how to behave well and you make the school a happy place
- your teachers care about you and they make sure that you are well looked after and have someone to talk to if you are worried
- you enjoy all the extra activities that adults organise for you during and after school. The Tudor work in the hall is lovely, and you can be really proud of all the extra work you did on it.

We know that Mrs Jarvis has plans to improve your school even more. We have especially asked her to work with your teachers on these things:

- raising the levels you reach in subjects, but especially in mathematics, by making sure there are even more really good lessons that challenge you to learn as quickly as you can
- getting everyone to school on time and making sure everyone comes to school, unless they are ill or have a very important reason to be away.

Good luck with the new 'huff and puff' club. It is really important that children keep active and healthy and that seems a good way of doing it.