



Malcolm Sargent Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120672
Local Authority LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number 291825
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
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 address	Empingham Road
School category	Foundation		Stamford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lincolnshire PE9 2SR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01780 762708
Number on roll (school)	542	Fax number	01780 765648
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr K Swanson
		Headteacher	Mr J Oates
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006	Inspection number 291825
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school serving a community with good social and economic advantages. There are few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak a language other than English. When they first start school, the great majority of children have levels of knowledge and skills which are at least average for their age. The number on roll has fallen in recent years because there are fewer children of school age living in the area. As a result, the school has lost teachers and some children are taught in 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: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership and management of the school.

The school provides pupils with an acceptable standard of education and value for money is satisfactory. Many parents have expressed positive views saying that on the whole their children are provided for well and make good progress. Nevertheless, standards have fallen in recent years and the pupils' progress has declined since 2003. While pupils overall make satisfactory progress and attain levels which are above average, this is not good enough considering their starting points. Higher-attaining pupils, especially boys at Key Stage 2, are underachieving in English and mathematics.

This situation has arisen because the school does not monitor and evaluate its work effectively, particularly in relation to the progress made by pupils and how this has declined. As a result, the support and challenge for pupils to help them make good progress is often ineffective. The school has recently introduced a system to check on pupils' progress but it is too soon for the benefits to be realised. Overall, this adversely affects the school's capacity to sustain high standards. The limitations of the monitoring and evaluation mean the school does not know itself as well as it should and its capacity to improve is impaired. The leaders and managers of the school have not set a clear enough agenda for maintaining the school's strengths and remedying weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but it is a mixed picture and this limits the school in its ability to raise standards. The successful teaching skilfully pursues clear objectives matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils learn effectively because they are fully engaged and enjoy the challenges presented to them. However, this is not sustained across the school and pupils' progress varies too much. The lack of systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning means the school is not in a good position to know about, and deal with, weaknesses in teaching.

Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good. The curriculum in the rest of the school is reasonable and provides some interesting and challenging learning opportunities, but too much fails to really excite pupils or encourage them to achieve high standards. The provision is sufficient to ensure pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. Care, support and guidance for pupils are sound. Pupils receive good personal care and they understand how to stay healthy and safe. Pupils' behaviour is good and they respond very positively to opportunities to be of help in school and beyond; the contributions they make are outstanding and their personal development is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make good use of the outcomes of the recently introduced system for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that their needs are met effectively.

- Develop comprehensive systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Traditionally standards have been high throughout the school; results in the national tests have been well above the national average. Children make sound progress in the Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with average to above average levels of understanding, skills and knowledge. However, results in Year 2 and Year 6 fell over the last two years and while standards were often above the national average, pupils' progress was only satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, boys underachieved in English and mathematics. The school cites factors outside its control to explain the downturn. Nevertheless, it has not had the means to evaluate rigorously the pupils' progress or to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of its provision to help it anticipate problems and sustain high standards. While some new systems are being implemented, the school has not so far been well-placed to manage pupils' progress effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. This underpins their personal development which is strong. The acts of collective worship do not sufficiently contribute to their spiritual development, which is satisfactory. Pupils' social skills are outstanding, which enable them to relate effectively to other pupils and adults in a wide range of situations. They express their feelings clearly and are able to handle moral issues confidently. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own is at least sound and growing. Pupils are well aware of the need to eat a balanced diet for healthy living and demonstrate this by eating a regular helping of fruit. Most pupils enthusiastically participate in an extensive range of physical activities because they know this will help them maintain good health. Pupils make an excellent contribution in school and beyond. They make recommendations through the school council, some of which have been adopted and resulted in welcome improvements, such as to the provision in the playground. Many pupils undertake some routine tasks to help the school, such as, supporting pupils in the playground through the 'buddy' system. The choir and instrumental groups perform in the community and pupils enthusiastically raise money for good causes. They enjoy being at school, feel safe and show good attitudes towards their work even in those lessons which are less engaging. Attendance is good and the school has maintained above the national rate over many years.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is slightly better at Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2. In Year 2, lessons are well planned and this is used to make learning interesting and meaningful to pupils, outstandingly so on occasions. Here, strong expertise in teaching literacy is having a good effect on standards because pupils' reading and writing is being promoted well through many subjects. At Key Stage 2 there is some equally good teaching but there is a significant amount of lessons which are barely satisfactory, being uninspiring and mainly routine in nature. These lessons do not get the best from pupils, particularly those who are able and willing. There has been insufficient action taken by leaders and managers to bring all lessons up to the level of the best.

Pupils' work is marked regularly, but while the feedback often gives praise it does not offer the level of advice pupils need to improve their work. Targets have been introduced but their use is not yet effective. The practice of using them to promote learning is not fully embedded throughout the school and not all pupils are aware of their targets. Enabling pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work is a new initiative. This is being skilfully employed in some lessons to support good progress but the system is not fully effective because it is not used by all teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It helps pupils effectively to understand the features of healthy living such as a balanced diet and exercise. There is good attention given to pupils learning to stay safe through personal, social and health education. Overall, literacy and numeracy are planned sufficiently. However, the work and activities involved sometimes only capture pupils' interest to a moderate extent. By contrast, as a result of good curriculum development, much more interest is being generated for pupils in Year 2 through an effective thematic approach which links subjects in interesting and novel ways. Here, pupils thoroughly enjoy inventing and planning a new seaside resort where making maps, building vehicles, spending money at a funfair, a study of the weather and recording findings and plans, all contribute to engaging and worthwhile learning opportunities. There are plans to extend this thematic approach throughout the school.

There is a good range of additional activities for pupils to choose from with many well supported after-school clubs, regular visits to local places relevant to their lessons and a residential visit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's pastoral care, guidance and support arrangements are effective and make all pupils feel well cared for. There are good links with support agencies in the community. Child protection procedures are in place. They are secure and managed appropriately by a trained person. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to and supported if they have a concern. The commitment to care by all staff is clearly shown in the positive way they treat pupils. Arrangements to help new pupils settle in school are well thought out and effective. The partnerships with secondary schools work effectively as pupils in Year 6 move to their new schools.

The academic guidance for pupils is ineffective mainly because a sufficiently refined use of their performance data is not fully in place. Some pupils are aware of their personal and curriculum related targets and know what they have to do to achieve them. However, this is not yet developed consistently across the school. The few pupils with learning difficulties are well supported through the effective additional help they receive away from their classroom and support in lessons is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has not set the pace and high expectation the school needs to keep sufficient control of standards and pupils' achievement. While governors support the school satisfactorily, the extent to which they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively is reduced by the limited information provided by the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been too limited. The need to maintain a rigorous check on teaching was highlighted then, but the monitoring of teaching is still not systematic enough to improve its quality. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is providing much needed expertise for moving the school forward. As a result, systems are being put into place to track and analyse pupils' performance, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

The school has plans to restructure the senior leadership group but at present, leadership and management across the school lacks coherence. The work of leaders at different levels within the school is not co-ordinated sufficiently well to eliminate the pockets of underperformance among pupils. The expert co-ordinator for literacy, for example, works predominantly in Key Stage 1 and provides good leadership, which is reflected in pupils' work. However, the impact on literacy in Key Stage 2, where support is needed is too limited. There are signs of more effective management emerging in mathematics showing in pupils' current work and in science with the introduction of more experimental and investigative activities.

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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?	4
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	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

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	3
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	1
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?	3

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Malcolm Sargent Primary School, Empingham Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 2SR

Thank you for the very warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and greatly appreciated the contributions made by the groups of pupils who met us.

These are the things we found best about your school:

- You often achieve good standards in your work.
- You all behave well in lessons and work as hard as your teachers expect.
- All staff look after you well and keep you safe; many pupils are very willing to help with this at playtimes.
- Besides lessons, you have other activities that offer you a good choice of interesting and enjoyable things to do.

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

- Pay closer attention to how much progress you are making because there are areas where it could be better.
- Look at ways of making all of your lessons as good as the best so that you gain more enjoyment from learning, get more from your work and make better progress.

Many thanks for your friendly welcome and help during the inspection.

Best wishes

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector