



Longden CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123546
Local Authority Shropshire
Inspection number 292707
Inspection date 16 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Eadie

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Plealey Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Longden
Age range of pupils	4-11		Shrewsbury SY5 8EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01743 860480
Number on roll (school)	101	Fax number	01743 861104
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	W H Higgins
		Headteacher	C.I.C. Tay
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the village and the surrounding rural community. It is popular, with around a fifth of the pupils travelling some distance to attend. Many of these joined after the normal starting time. Almost all pupils are White British and all speak English at home.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is very popular with parents, and several made comments such as, 'We have never come across a school with such a positive ethos' and 'The school seeks to develop the whole child'. This is hardly surprising as it is a good school with some outstanding features. The root of its success is good leadership and management. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future direction of the school and this is communicated very well to all staff, governors and parents. The end result is a school which knows exactly where it is going and how it will get there.

Pupils are achieving well and reach above average standards by the time they leave. They make good progress and learn well in all classes because teaching is good. Teachers make their lessons enjoyable and all subjects are popular. Pupils said they thoroughly enjoy coming to school; as one young pupil said, 'School is fun, every day we do morning maths'. The school has correctly identified areas for improvement, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils' standards of sentence structure and calculation are not as good as other aspects of English and mathematics.

One of the key reasons for the pupils' enjoyment of school is the outstanding curriculum. Parents commented that they have chosen this school because of the breadth of opportunities for their children. Work in the creative arts is particularly strong with, for example, musical events being highlights of the school year. Pupils also enjoy the wide range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. Many take advantage of the sporting clubs and, with the exercise that they take and the healthy diet that most take advantage of, they are developing an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Provision for children of Reception age is good. Despite sharing a class with pupils of Year 1 age, a full range of activities is planned to address their particular needs and they make good progress.

Pastoral care is excellent. This is the major reason why pupils' personal development is outstanding. Parents recognise the care of their children as being a high priority for the school, and 'We are delighted with the level of pastoral care and strong moral ethos' was typical of comments made. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for and they are very well aware of how to stay safe. Safe practices, both in school and in their daily lives, are rapidly becoming second nature.

Care, guidance and support are good. The progress that pupils make from year to year is carefully monitored and this has recently been modified so that progress is checked more regularly. The school is working to improve systems of academic support and guidance. For example, although marking is thorough, it does not often clearly identify exactly what pupils need to learn next.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that improvements in writing and mathematics are maintained by developing pupils' skills in sentence structure and calculation.
- Improve marking so that it is clearly focused on pupils' next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children of Reception age have levels of skills and knowledge below those expected when they join the school. They make good progress in all classes and achieve well to reach above average standards by the time they leave. There has been a steady improvement in results in national tests in recent years, both in Year 2 and Year 6. Challenging targets are set for pupils' progress and many achieve or even surpass these targets. However, the most pleasing aspect is the steady improvement in pupils' progress from the national tests in Year 2 to those in Year 6. The reason for these improvements is the careful analysis carried out and the focused plans for development. The current focus is to address relative weaknesses identified in areas of pupils' skills in writing and mathematics. Pupils identified with learning difficulties are supported well and make the same progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding throughout the school. They adopt a healthy lifestyle and enjoy growing their own vegetables and making salads. They talk with enthusiasm about using the potatoes and tomatoes they have grown for their meals. There are excellent relationships throughout the school which result in a very happy atmosphere. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is evidenced by their good attendance and their enthusiastic participation in their learning from Reception to Year 6.

Pupils behave very well. They show sensitive regard for pupils with learning difficulties and they are accepting of the needs of others. These, along with rising levels of basic skills, prepare pupils well for their future life. A parent's comment, typical of many made, is, 'We feel that our children will have learnt life skills necessary for a happy adulthood'. Pupils take an active part in the life of the school, by participating in charity and eco councils, where they take decisions to raise funds to sponsor a child in Ghana and plan fundraising activities, for example. Their contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. Another parental comment concluded that 'children have a great sense of responsibility for justice, global issues and cultural diversity'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The excellent relationships evident through the school have a considerable effect on the classroom environment. They result in a mutually respectful atmosphere, where pupils are keen to do well and work hard. Teachers make sure that their lessons are interesting, pupils saying such things as, 'lessons are fun.' This ensures that pupils

enjoy lessons and consequently learn well. Teachers almost always share the objective for the lesson with pupils, who are therefore involved in their learning.

Teachers cope well with the mixed age groups in their classes, planning effectively to meet their differing needs. Teachers' planning also takes into account the effectiveness of pupils' previous learning. Planned lessons are often adapted so that, for example, gaps in learning that have been identified in previous lessons can be filled. Teachers' marking is thorough but is not sufficiently clearly focused on pointing out how pupils can improve their work. This means that pupils are not always learning at the best possible rate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum for children of Reception age, which was an issue at the previous inspection, has improved greatly. A good range of activities are planned, which meet the different learning needs of these young children. The curriculum through the whole school has been adapted very well to meet the needs of the pupils without losing any rigour. For example, very good links are made between subjects so that pupils can see the relevance of their learning. Planning takes account of pupils' different needs in mixed age classes and it therefore builds successfully on pupils' previous learning.

There is a very wide range of carefully planned visits, visitors and well-attended extra-curricular activities. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' personal development and academic progress. The Christian ethos underpins all school provision. Parents from outside the area choose Longden School because of the breadth of the curriculum on offer. The curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' overall enjoyment. One pupil typically said that 'this is a very good school'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school with very good procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils. Excellent relationships with parents and pupils, along with guidance and sensitive support, ensure that pupils achieve well.

They greatly value the school's success in providing a safe and secure place in which to learn and play.

Whilst there are clear systems of assessment in place to help teachers and pupils know what needs to be learnt next, marking does not focus clearly enough on these next steps of learning and how they can be achieved. The 'steps to success' system is helping pupils work towards improvements. A particular strength of these arrangements is the involvement of parents in this process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has a very thorough process of self-evaluation. A particular strength of this is the involvement of parents. There is an annual open evening, which many parents attend to review with the headteacher the achievements of the previous year. Parents are also elected to a home-school council which meets with leaders to discuss plans for the future. Parents consider that these opportunities are very valuable, saying such things as, 'As a parent you feel very much part of what goes on'. The school therefore has a very accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development, which are carried through to a detailed school development plan. However, measures to evaluate the success of addressing items in this plan are not sufficiently specific.

The headteacher is keen that all improvements made should be fully embedded and sustainable, rather than going for a 'quick fix'. This is commendable and is seen in the steady improvements made in standards and pupils' progress. There is a clear vision that all involved in leadership and management share for the future of the school. For example, the governors have recently restructured their committees to enable them to plan strategically to cope with the declining number of children living in the area. This vision, along with the progress made and being maintained since the previous inspection, shows that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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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	2
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	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	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

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	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

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school this week. We were very impressed with how polite and well-mannered you are. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing how proud you are of your school. You are right to be proud as it is a good school with some outstanding features. These are the things that are best about your school

- You are developing into mature and sensible young people. Your behaviour is super and the work of your charity council and eco council shows how thoughtful you are.
- The range of things you are taught is excellent. You learn lots of interesting things and the teachers plan a really good range of visits, visitors and out of school clubs for you.
- You are learning well and making good progress because teaching is good. You told us that your teachers make their lessons fun.
- All adults look after you very well and make sure that you are kept safe.
- Your headteacher and other teachers have a clear plan to continue to improve the school. They know what needs to be done to make things even better and how they can do it.

These are the things that we have suggested to your school that might be improved

- Your writing is not as good as your reading, and your calculation skills are not as good as other areas of maths.
- Although teachers mark your work well, they do not always point out how you can make your work better.