

Leechpool Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125918
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293398
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Parker

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	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Connett
Headteacher	Sylvia Forder
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2001
School address	Leechpool Lane Horsham RH13 6AG
Telephone number	01403 210233
Fax number	01403 240956

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a few from minority ethnic groups. English is an additional language for a small number, but very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is much higher than average. The school has achieved a Basic Skills award for a second time.

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 provides a good standard of education. The quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils is outstanding. Attainment on entry to Reception is below expectations but pupils achieve well across the school. Standards are broadly average by Year 6, although they are not high enough in problem solving in mathematics or in writing.

After the previous inspection, strategic changes and challenges created a period of uncertainty which led to pupils' academic performance and behaviour falling significantly. Three years ago the newly appointed headteacher set about a process of review and reform with great determination, guided by the local authority. Her strong leadership has inspired senior managers, staff and governors. There is now a shared commitment to school improvement through rigorous self-evaluation, training and sharing of good practice. Teaching has been strengthened and is good overall. Teamwork is strong, giving staff the confidence to redesign the curriculum which has strengthened links between subjects and made learning more exciting and purposeful. This recent innovation has not yet had a full impact but is improving standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and science.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development, and behaviour is satisfactory. Occasional misbehaviour in lessons is handled well. Pupils show an outstanding commitment to their community and willingly take on responsibilities. The school is calm and orderly with a good working atmosphere. Many high quality displays celebrate pupils' best work and help to make the school a stimulating place in which to learn. Staff know individuals well and give them strong encouragement. 'Leechpool is about the whole child,' as one appreciative parent typically put it. The needs of all pupils are met well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. There are well-established links with outside agencies so that effective specialist help is given to pupils who need it.

Approaches to assessing pupils' progress in basic skills are exemplary. The information is carefully analysed to identify where extra help is needed and to guide teaching. It is an impressive feature that expectations for learning are shared with the whole school as a 'learning ladder', through displays and as a focus in assemblies. Pupils are beginning to take a keen interest in their own progress.

The school is well led and managed. There is a strong senior management team. Subject leaders have begun to take responsibility for monitoring provision and standards in their subjects but the impact of their work has not yet raised standards to where they should be. The governing body is well informed and plays a good part in monitoring the school's performance. Governors have shown exemplary commitment in developing specific roles that use their skills to benefit the school. Value for money is good. The school analyses its performance thoroughly and its judgements are mostly accurate. A very large majority of parents strongly appreciate the work of the school and agree that their children do well. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly in problem solving and writing.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders in monitoring standards and provision, particularly the impact of changes in the curriculum, assessment procedures and target setting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Standards on entry to Reception are below average overall, with particular weaknesses in language and social skills. Teaching and resources are well planned to overcome these weaknesses and children in Reception make good progress. Standards in Years 2 and 6 were well above average at the previous inspection but there was significant underachievement in the period of disruption that followed. Test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 had fallen to well below average by 2005. The school made determined efforts to match teaching and resources more accurately to individual needs. As a result, test results rose sharply in 2006 to broadly average levels in Years 2 and 6. Standards in the present Year 2 continue to be average overall. However, the school has successfully tackled significant weakness in that the performance of girls has improved in mathematics and that of boys in writing.

Standards in the present Year 6 are average overall. Problem solving is a weakness in mathematics. The number reaching the higher level in science has risen since last year and boys especially have responded well to an increase in practical investigations. It is proving more difficult to raise standards in English and mathematics in this year group, where over one third are registered as having learning difficulties. By contrast, standards in Year 5 are above average and pupils are responding well to the revised curriculum. Throughout the school, standards in writing and mathematics are affected by the slow pace of some pupils in writing their answers and a lack of care over presentation and accuracy in daily work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good, including the spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects. Pupils' contribution to the life of the school and community is outstanding. They support many charities and are well aware of social, moral and environmental issues. They effectively learn about other cultures in art and music. Their excellent response in assemblies indicates the good quality of their spiritual awareness. Attendance is good and the number of exclusions is low. Pupils enjoy school and their attitudes are generally positive. They develop good work habits and collaborate well with others. Parents speak very highly of school drama productions that show their children's growing confidence and skill in teamwork. Year 6 pupils feel confident about moving to secondary school.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It is usually good around the school and the behaviour of many pupils is excellent. The system of rewards and sanctions is well understood, although the behaviour of a few pupils is still not as good as it should be. This slows their learning and occasionally that of others. The school council plays an important part in discussing improvements and is rightly proud of its role. Other pupils help run playtime activities and sort out younger pupils' problems. Awareness of health issues is good, although some still choose unhealthy food. Most are keen on sport and many take part in the good range of activities available.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers in each year group share their expertise to produce well-informed lesson plans with clear targets. The role of teaching assistants is clearly identified so that staff teamwork has a good impact on the learning of pupils of differing abilities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their instruction is brisk and clearly focused. Expectations for attentiveness and participation are high. Resources are used well to illustrate key points. Questioning is sensitively adjusted so that pupils of all abilities are fully included. There is a good focus on prompting thoughtful answers. This was particularly well done in a Reception class, where children lacking confidence were prompted through more questions to extend their ideas. Activities are well organised and managed. Expectations for the quantity, accuracy and presentation of work are not consistently high enough throughout the school. Marking is generally good and sometimes outstanding in helping individuals to reach their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of learning experiences that are well matched to pupils' interests and needs. A stimulating range of activities is planned for children in the classroom and the attractive and well-resourced outside area. The whole-school curriculum has been imaginatively revised to draw different subjects together around appealing topics. This innovation is too recent for its impact on learning to be evaluated in full, particularly its contribution to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, the science focus of some topics is having a good impact on standards in that subject. The curriculum is adapted well for pupils of different abilities. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well focused and in child-friendly language. There is a good range of appropriate programmes and support for other groups, including gifted and talented pupils and those learning English as an additional language. The curriculum is effectively enriched by many educational visits, special events and visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is excellent. At its heart are the warm and supportive relationships that adults develop with pupils. Staff know their pupils well and give them strong encouragement to do their best. Good provision is made for pupils with specific needs and monitoring procedures are exceptionally thorough. Supervision around the school is good. Health and safety routines, risk assessments and child protection procedures are fully in place.

There has been an impressive development in approaches to assessment, tracking and target setting resulting in improving standards in the core subjects. The information is used effectively to set targets for classes, groups and individuals. Exemplary care has been taken to explain the new system to pupils so they know what they must themselves do to improve. As a result, they are achieving well and standards are beginning to rise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are now good. The headteacher's strong drive to raise standards and improve provision has been communicated well to the staff team. All are enthusiastic about improving the school further. The academic targets set are challenging. Pupils say that behaviour is much better now and consequently they find learning more enjoyable. They are now involved in decision making and in evaluating their own work. The very large majority of parents are very happy with the education that their children are receiving, one writing, 'My children actually run to school because they are so excited about going.'

Some subject leaders are new in post and the school recognises the need to develop their role in monitoring the quality of provision and its impact on standards in their subjects.

Governance is good. Governors offer a wide range of valuable expertise and have made impressive progress in developing their roles, for instance, in checking the monitoring of the senior management team. The school's evaluation of its performance is based on a thorough analysis of data and is used rigorously to guide school development. Resources are managed well, including the large team of teaching assistants.

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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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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?	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.

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	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

30 April 2007

Dear Children,

Leechpool Primary School, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 6AG

As you know, we came to your school recently to find out how well you are doing. We enjoyed talking to you because you were very polite and friendly. Many of you were very helpful when you showed us around and explained what was going on. We were very impressed with many things you were doing and the beautiful displays of your work.

Here are some of the things that we liked about your school:

- You help around school and take on responsibilities.
- You work well with partners and can be trusted to work on your own.
- You work hard and enjoy lessons as well as the many clubs and other activities.
- You know your targets and want to improve.
- You know a lot about caring for the environment.

We know that your headteacher and other adults want the school to be even better so we have asked them to make these improvements:

- To help you do better in English and mathematics.
- To give teachers who are subject leaders a bigger part in checking how well you are doing and finding out what works best.

Thank you again for your help. We send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Parker (Lead inspector)