



Longmeadow Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 135083
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 294265
Inspection dates 8–9 February 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Milton

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oaks Cross
School category	Community		Broadwater, Stevenage
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire SG2 8LT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01438 351087
Number on roll (school)	470	Fax number	01438 210544
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Gardner
		Headteacher	Miss L Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Longmeadow Primary School has a nursery and is much bigger than the average primary school. It opened in September 2005 with a new headteacher, and was formed by the amalgamation of an infant school and junior school that were next to each other on the same site. It is part of a federation with a nearby primary school, and the two separate schools have the same federated governing body. The pupils are from a wide variety of backgrounds. A significant number come from low social and economic background. Most pupils are from White British heritage. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Longmeadow provides a satisfactory education. It is an improving school with some good features and clear areas for improvement. The headteacher provides good leadership and has achieved much in just over four terms to create a common ethos and to introduce many improvements which are starting to raise standards.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although it varies according to the quality of teaching. Children's standards are well below average on entry to the nursery where they make good progress. During Reception, children's progress is slower but steady. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage, including teaching, is satisfactory. Pupils' standards are below average when they enter Year 1, but they make good progress as a result of effective teaching and reach average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. During Key Stage 2, pupils make adequate progress because teaching is satisfactory, and they reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

The headteacher has introduced an excellent method of tracking the term-by-term progress of individual pupils and classes in reading, writing and mathematics. This information showed that in the school's first year pupils' progress was erratic during Key Stage 2. As a result, a number of improvements are being made in different classes including pupils assessing their own learning, marking that helps pupils to understand how to improve their standards, and target setting for individual pupils. However, these are not yet consistent in all classes. Since last September, a good range of changes has been made to improve pupils' progress in English. As a result of these and other changes, pupils' progress is improving. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour is good and they usually listen well during lessons. They enjoy school and, during the inspection, had enormous fun in the snow during lunchtime. They feel safe at school and know how to keep safe in different situations. The satisfactory curriculum covers all of the National Curriculum requirements and a start has been made to making some good links between subjects, as when Year 5 pupils make their own information books about the Aztecs. There is some good enrichment through residential visits, music, links with secondary schools and extra-curricular sports but the curriculum does not yet stimulate and encourage learning sufficiently in each class. Pupils have healthy lifestyles. There is good quality care, guidance and support, especially for vulnerable pupils. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion by, for example, providing after-school art classes for parents and their children, singing at a local home for the elderly, and supporting local charities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with an effective governing body. The school's track record so far demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement because its accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is used to select its well chosen targets for improvement, and these are increasing pupils' rates of progress. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The federation enhances the leadership

capacity of the school, and is effective in helping the school to improve the quality of its care and education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure good provision throughout the Foundation Stage so that children's learning is consistently good.
- Build on the improvements to target setting and assessment to secure whole-school approaches that help pupils learn as much as possible.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school.
- Devise a curriculum that provides each class with stimulating, creative learning activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

On entry to the nursery, children's knowledge and skills are low in language and communication, mathematical development, and personal and social skills. Although children have some good opportunities for choosing activities in the Foundation Stage, there are times when adults do not help enough to focus these activities on the children's particular learning needs. During the Foundation Stage, children's achievement is satisfactory and best in the nursery.

Pupils' achievement is good during Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 their standards are average overall, although girls' standards are significantly higher than those of boys. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1 because they know their individual targets for improvement. Teaching is good and steps are being taken to use resources and teaching methods that appeal to boys. During the 2005–6 school year, pupils' achievement was erratic in Years 3 to 5 with good achievement during Year 6. Since last September, a good number of improvements have been made to teaching, the curriculum and assessment and so pupils are achieving more this year. The school has set challenging targets for the Year 6 pupils' results in 2007.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good range of provision and the effective work of teaching assistants. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to that of other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, are good. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils know that any isolated incidents of bullying are quickly dealt with. All are confident that they can approach an adult for help with any problems. Most pupils listen carefully in lessons and do their best although, at times, some lose their concentration when teaching fails to capture their interest. When given the opportunity, pupils work well in groups.

Pupils' preparation for their next stage of education is sound with their average standards in the key skills of literacy and numeracy.

As well as one swimming lesson and two physical education lessons each week, many pupils take part in the wide range of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community by fundraising for a wide range of charities and participating in local events, such as 'Stevenage in Bloom'. Pupils are involved in the school council, although they have insufficient opportunities for responsibility in running its meetings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although there is good teaching in the nursery, there is some teaching in the Foundation Stage that does not have a sharp enough focus on what children are meant to learn. In Key Stages 1 and 2, strengths include good relationships, well-structured lesson plans and the sharing of learning objectives with pupils. Teaching assistants are usually effective in helping pupils to learn although occasionally they are not actively involved during whole-class teaching. Weaker aspects of teaching in a few lessons include pupils being required to sit on the carpet listening for too long, the pace of learning flagging while resources are distributed, and activities that do not grasp pupils' interest. In an exemplary lesson, the teaching was bright and animated, and pupils assessed their own work against the success criteria they had been given at the start of the lesson. Some good steps are being taken to give pupils more responsibility for their learning in some classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The broad, balanced curriculum meets the learning needs and interests of pupils to a satisfactory level. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits, residential visits for Years 3 to 6, and after-school clubs that pupils enjoy. There is a strong emphasis on provision for English and mathematics and other strengths include provision for art, music and sport. The Foundation Stage's curriculum follows national guidance although learning activities are not always sufficiently interesting and purposeful. Imaginative play is not well developed in the Reception classes. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. The school has a policy for supporting pupils who are gifted and talented but its implementation is at an early stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision to ensure pupils' health and safety and child protection are comprehensive and thorough. There are good procedures for encouraging better attendance. Close

links with a good range of professionals and external agencies ensure very good support for vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and this has a positive impact on their progress. The systems for academic guidance are designed well and their implementation by individual teachers, though still inconsistent, is improving. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 have detailed, individual targets for literacy and numeracy, and these are now regularly checked and updated. Detailed tracking of pupils' term-by-term progress is being regularly analysed to identify any pupils at risk of underachievement, and these pupils then receive additional support. As yet, however, there has been insufficient time for these excellent systems to have their full impact on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has introduced an excellent system for measuring pupils' progress each term and this information is used to raise standards and improve teaching. The leadership team is new, and its effectiveness is developing. The principal of the federation and the deputy headteacher work closely with the headteacher and are making a good contribution. The team responsible for the provision of English has made a good range of improvements in a short time but is realistic about the amount of work still needed to raise standards across the school. Parents, pupils and governors are involved in the good procedures for the self-evaluation of a wide range of the school's work. The federated governing body, ably led by the chair, is determined to ensure that the school's key priority is to raise standards. It functions well as a critical friend of the school, and governors carry out visits to check on the quality of education. The school has started a good range of improvements since it opened just over four terms ago, and these are beginning to result in improvements to pupils' progress and in higher standards.

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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?	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	3
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	NA

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	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	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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

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	2
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	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

12 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Longmeadow Primary School, Oaks Cross, Broadwater, Stevenage, SG2 8LT

Mrs Smith, Mr Messer and I really enjoyed visiting your school last week and meeting you, Miss Hodgson, the staff and some of the governors. We are very grateful to so many of you and your parents for getting to school despite the heavy snow. It was interesting to hear from you that you like school, feel safe and secure, enjoy the residential trips and know what your targets are to improve your work.

You behave well and are usually keen to do your best work. Year 6 pupils worked well together during their Victorian afternoon. You make good progress with your learning in some years and steady progress in other years. This is because teaching is at least satisfactory and some lessons are really good and help you to learn a great deal. Miss Hodgson and the staff are working hard to help you all to make good progress all of the time. Your teachers are using different ways of setting targets, improving marking and helping you to assess your own work so that you can learn more. The school is improving what you learn by, for example, making interesting links between subjects as Year 5 pupils did when they made their Aztec information books. You have good opportunities for art, physical education and music but we think the rest of the curriculum could be made more interesting for you.

The main things Miss Hodgson and the staff need to do to make the school even better are to:

- Bring teaching and learning throughout the Foundation Stage up to the standard of the best lessons we saw.
- Help you understand how to improve your work even more by making sure all your teachers check your targets and mark and assess your work really well.
- Develop teaching so that lessons are always good throughout the school.
- Provide each class with learning activities in all subjects that you enjoy and find interesting.

You can help the school to get even better by continuing to behave well and to do your best work, and by thinking carefully about how you can improve your work.

With best wishes for the rest of the school year,

Mike Milton

(Lead inspector)