

Laygate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108672
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	301359
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Tom Pigott
Headteacher	Mr Michael Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Laygate Lane South Shields Tyne and Wear NE33 4JJ
Telephone number	0191 4562470
Fax number	0191 4554510

Age group	3–11
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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

Laygate Community School is an average size primary school. The number of pupils attending the school has fallen over recent years. It serves a community of South Tyneside that experiences very high levels of social and economic disadvantage where two thirds of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Nearly a third of pupils come from minority ethnic communities and have English as an additional language. Over 30 different languages are spoken. Twenty five pupils have recently arrived from other countries including six from families seeking asylum. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. A significantly higher number of pupils than usual join or leave the school at various times throughout the school year; many of whom stay only for a short time.

The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Laygate Community School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It is improving despite facing very challenging circumstances. There are some notable strengths, particularly the good progress Year 6 pupils have made this year in English and science. It rightly judges itself to be a happy and inclusive school where all are welcomed, valued and supported. Relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary and pupils of many nationalities work and play together in harmony. The good, caring and safe environment provided enables all pupils to enjoy their time in school, however short that time is. The school is well respected by, and lies at the heart of, the multicultural community it serves.

The school welcomes parents at all times. As one parent commented, 'The open door policy makes parents welcome in the school. Nothing is too much bother for any member of staff or volunteer.' Family learning courses provided in the school are highly regarded by those attending. The courses are building the confidence and skills of the local community as well as helping parents to support their children's learning. Where language barriers exist, great efforts are made to support families and children. An overwhelming proportion of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school, particularly in their perceptions of their children's enjoyment of, and safety in school and in the progress they make because of what they consider to be good teaching.

Pupils enter school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. Despite a good start in Nursery and good teaching in Year 2, standards remain below average by the time pupils are seven years old, but their progress is satisfactory given their starting points. By the time pupils leave school at age 11, they are now making sustained good progress and broadly reach the nationally expected levels for their age. The school works very successfully with other agencies to support the many vulnerable pupils and families who need extra help. As a result, pupils with English as a second language, vulnerable pupils (including those who attend school for only a short time), and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, all make at least satisfactory progress in their learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is good. Pupils are respectful, well behaved, caring and tolerant of each other and adults alike. The school ensures that the cultural diversity of the community is celebrated. The wide range of trips, including a popular residential visit and visits to places of worship enrich pupils' experiences and further support their spiritual and cultural development. These opportunities, together with the good range of out-of-school activities enhance the good curriculum. Although placed in one of the most deprived communities in the country, charitable giving is a strong feature of the school and pupils contribute whole-heartily to fundraising and charity events for the local community and further afield. The school's good work to encourage pupils to adopt and enjoy healthy lifestyles is having a positive impact on their well-being. They value the fun and exciting 'wake and shake' sessions. As one pupil said, 'It's important because it helps you get ready for the rest of the day.'

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The highly committed headteacher, well supported by the refocused leadership team and increasingly effective governing body, has set a clear direction for the school's improvement. They are beginning to see success in this endeavour, particularly in Key Stage 2.

However, despite these strengths, some key improvements in the school's work are not yet consistently in place across the school. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although it is good in the Nursery. However, there are weaknesses in the leadership and management of this phase, particularly in the use of assessment to record children's achievements and inform their future learning needs. Plans are in place to remedy the weaknesses.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. There is good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching. Teachers work hard to overcome the many barriers to pupils' learning. In many lessons, teachers are well prepared, enthusiastic and make the work interesting. Consequently, pupils enjoy their lessons, generally work hard and behave well. Lessons are generally well planned but do not always provide sufficiently challenging opportunities to stretch the most able pupils. There are currently limited opportunities for teachers to learn from the best practice, because evaluation of the quality of teaching is not always systematic or regular enough. The school has good plans to continue to improve the use of assessment, data and information to provide for pupils' different abilities and to check their progress. This has already made a significant difference to pupils' progress and attainment in Key Stage 2 but such information is not always used well enough in some classes. The marking policy is of good quality and when properly implemented provides pupils with a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to do better. However, the policy is not consistently applied across the school.

The school has addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection effectively. Its use of self-evaluation is now well established and is driving the improvements secured in English and science this year. The school is making a positive difference to pupils' enjoyment and achievement and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 1.
- Improve the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure lessons include challenging tasks for all pupils.
- Improve the consistency with which data and information about pupils are used to target actions to raise standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

A high and increasing proportion of children entering the Foundation Stage are at the very early stages of learning English and many have poorly developed communication and language skills. Good provision in Nursery ensures that all children settle well and make good progress. Despite this good start, they achieve standards well below those found nationally by the time they enter Year 1. Standards remain below national expectations by the end of Year 2. Provisional test results for 2007 show a rise in standards at Year 6, indicating satisfactory progress in mathematics and good progress in English and science. The provisional results for 2007 indicate the school has met or exceeded its challenging 2007 targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe in school and say they are well supported by all adults and know what to do and who to go to if they are having any problems. They value and respect each other and understand the importance of supporting new pupils from many different backgrounds and cultures who regularly arrive at the school. Anti-racist and bullying policies are strongly promoted and pupils know such behaviours are not tolerated. Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development is reflected in the quality of their relationships. Assemblies, supported by parents, governors and other visitors, recognise and reward pupils' academic and personal successes. This recognition boosts pupils' self-confidence and sustains their good behaviour and positive attitudes to work. Pupils have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and the local community. The choir is highly regarded across the area. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and making decisions through their roles as buddies, house captains and school councillors. They are proud of their school and the difference the school council is making; for example, to improvements in the playground. The majority of pupils attend regularly. Although attendance has fallen recently, this is mainly because of a small number of families taking extended holidays. The school, working closely with education welfare officers, has taken decisive action to improve attendance and punctuality, particularly in the Foundation Stage, so that good attitudes develop early.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships between staff and pupils, together with effective teaching, are helping pupils to develop good learning habits. These can be seen in their current progress and positive attitudes in lessons. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned, linked to the medium and long-term aims of each subject and well matched to the individual pupil's needs. In these lessons, a lively pace, good use of support from teaching assistants and the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards sustains pupils' interest and involvement and ensures no time is wasted. Where teaching is not as effective, planning does not always identify sufficiently challenging tasks for the more able pupils. Consequently, in such lessons, whilst most pupils make satisfactory progress, not all are stretched to do their best. The assessment of pupils' learning is improving, but not all pupils receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs and interests of pupils. It is satisfactory overall in the Foundation Stage, with good outdoor provision. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and vulnerable pupils, those with early language development and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by adults in class so that they learn alongside their peers. The curriculum has been reviewed in some subjects; for example, in English, information and communication technology (ICT), and science. Plans are in place to implement improvements across the other areas of the curriculum. Adults and pupils now use ICT effectively in lessons. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. Music is a strength. Gifted young linguists benefit from support with languages and international

links and some pupils speak up to four languages. Well attended homework clubs help children whose parents find it difficult to support their learning at home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care and support provided to pupils is good and is clearly demonstrated by the school's inclusive culture of mutual support and respect that helps all pupils to feel safe and valued. The school has many pupils with complex needs. Good partnerships between the school and a wide range of external agencies support these pupils and their families. This ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress during their time in school. Procedures for child protection, health and safety and risk assessments are securely in place and safeguarding procedures for staff and visitors comply with national requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall. In an increasing number of lessons, good pupil tracking and information helps pupils know and understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, such information is not used consistently well enough across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The leadership team has an accurate view of the school's performance and knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Regular work scrutiny and use of termly 'assessment weeks', provide staff with a clear understanding of the strengths of the curriculum and pupils' learning; and where improvements are required. Teachers are increasingly using information and data about pupils' performance to inform lesson planning and influence the school improvement plan. The school is aware of the need to develop this further and to ensure that information about pupils' performance informs actions and targets for improvement in all plans.

The accountability and leadership roles of middle managers are being strengthened. They and other staff are well supported and value the training opportunities aimed at improving their practice. Effective financial management arrangements are in place and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
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	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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	3
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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laygate School, Tyne and Wear, NE33 4JJ.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your good behaviour and friendliness towards us as we moved around the school and came into classes to see how well you were doing. You are also friendly and caring towards each other and it was lovely to see you all getting on so well. I was so sorry we missed Year 6 pupils who were out at camp but we were able to see their work and the good progress they have made in English and science. I would like you to thank all of your parents who filled in the inspection questionnaires. The responses are very positive and nearly everyone who responded say they are happy with the quality of education and care you receive.

We believe the school provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education for you and all staff work hard to provide good support and care. We also found:

- you enjoy school and feel safe. You also say there is always someone there to help you in times of need
- in good lessons your teachers provide interesting, well planned opportunities for you to learn well. In some lessons, not all of you are stretched to do your best
- you study a good range of subjects with lots of opportunities for extra fun and excitement through visits and after-school activities, which you value highly
- you enjoy having opportunities to take responsibility such as buddies, house captains and school councillors. You have helped the school to make improvements to the playground as a result of your ideas
- you work hard to raise money for charity on occasions such as red nose day and events that support your local community.

We have asked the school to improve the standards you reach in Year 2. We also want the school to make better use of the information they have about your work to help you get better. Once again, thank you for helping us when we visited. You are great ambassadors for your school and your community and we wish you well in the future where ever that may take you.

Best wishes

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector