

Layer-de-la-Haye Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115080
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311818
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Clint Price
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Wilkie
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	High Road Layer-de-la-haye Colchester Essex CO2 0DS
Telephone number	01206734249
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school located in a village on the outskirts of Colchester. There are similar numbers of boys and girls. Most pupils are of White British ethnic origin. The percentage from minority ethnic groups, or for whom English is an additional language, is well below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils who have additional learning needs, or a statement of educational need, are also well below average.

The school is one of nearly 500, from 10 local authorities around the country, taking part in the government's national 'Making Good Progress' pilot scheme. This programme is focusing on Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils. It is aiming to ensure that all children meet their potential, with no child left behind.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has significant strengths in the pupils' outstanding personal development and the quality of care provided. It gives good value for money because it enables pupils to achieve well and make good, steady progress to attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. It is an inclusive school, which knows its strengths and understands well how to improve further. It is successful because it has the learning and welfare of its pupils at the heart of its thinking and planning. As a church school, it has a clear focus on Christian Gospel values, and these are distinctly evident in its life and work. Consequently, pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not only a strength but also a foundation, which underpins effectively their attitudes to learning.

Behaviour is excellent and, because they are safeguarded well, pupils are keen to stress how very secure they feel at school. There is a strong sense of community. Pupils respect each other and develop responsibly as future citizens. Healthy lifestyles are promoted exceptionally well. Pastoral support is strong and academic guidance good. Pupils requiring additional support with their learning progress well. Assessment systems have improved significantly over the past year. The school is working on additional strategies to ensure greater challenge for higher attaining pupils, particularly in science, is embedded consistently across the school. However, pupils have yet to become involved consistently and more regularly in the tracking and review of their individual targets. Nevertheless, the standards pupils achieve in key skills help to prepare them well for their future lives and education.

Learning is effective, and promoted well through good teaching and a good curriculum. Pupils are keen to stress how much they enjoy learning, and this is reflected in the above average attendance. Pupils want to come to school. Through initiatives such as the 'Excellence and Enjoyment' weeks, themes and topics are used effectively to create links between subjects. These are making the learning of key skills increasingly more meaningful for the pupils. Teachers and pupils alike are enthusiastic about this approach. Some fascinating and intriguing ideas created through a mathematics and design project were seen being developed prior to pupils presenting them in a 'Dragons' Den' assembly. This epitomises the sort of challenges offered to pupils, to which they rise cooperatively and enthusiastically.

Leadership, management and governance are all good. Under the headteacher's effective leadership, staff cooperate well and share ideas in the planning of improvements. School self-evaluation is generally good and subject leaders are keen to develop their expertise and strategic management skills further. However, they still have some way to go in developing their analysis data to inform the setting of pupils' targets for improvement. Nevertheless, the headteacher, staff and governors work effectively together to create the right conditions within which most pupils prosper. Consequently, pupils are being prepared sensitively for their future. As one parent wrote, 'Our children all have different learning abilities but are progressing well and, perhaps as importantly, are happy at the school.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Reception Year varies slightly with each half-yearly intake, but is broadly average. Good teaching and support enable children to settle quickly into school life because the school places an important emphasis on their personal, social and emotional

development. Good evaluation and analysis of children's individual needs identify swiftly where support is needed most, and how to target it. Children make good progress in literacy because of new activities for learning how to link sounds and letters. This is now enabling children to cope better in other areas of their development. They learn well because creativity is encouraged. The 'Fairy Bubbles', who lives in a classroom cupboard, is making a very effective contribution to children's imaginative, as well as to their spiritual, cultural and academic development! Good achievement is promoted effectively by good planning and an interesting learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the improving use of assessment by ensuring all pupils become more consistently familiar with their targets and therefore know better how to improve.
- Ensure the new strategies to improve challenge for higher attaining pupils are embedded fully and consistently across the school, particularly in science.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so they all become confident in the analysis and use of data as a means of raising further pupils' standards and achievement

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the 2007 national tests, standards were average by Year 2 and above average overall by Year 6. There were significantly more girls in Year 2. They attained above average standards whereas boys were below. However, most pupils made satisfactory progress in the standards they had gained in literacy and numeracy since the end of the Foundation Stage. By Year 6 in 2007, pupils had also made satisfactory progress from their time in Year 3. Standards were above average in English, well above in mathematics, but only broadly average in science. During the current year, the school has resolved this underachievement in science, particularly with higher attaining pupils. Standards in science have risen and, like English and mathematics, are now above average by Year 6 because of new assessment and targeting systems and improved resources. Consequently, pupils have made good progress and are achieving well. The school is now, rightly, working to consolidate its success in science with older pupils in order to raise standards and achievement in other year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school enormously, affirm how proud they are of it and say it is getting better all the time. They have excellent attitudes and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils confirm they feel extremely safe and that bullying and racism are exceptionally rare. They work hard, do their best and attendance, particularly in Year 6, is very good. Pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is excellent. Together with an impressive school council, pupils make some outstanding contributions to the school and its local community that promote good levels of mutual respect and understanding. Pupils gain a good range of skills to support their future economic well-being, including enterprise skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding overall. Cultural development is good and pupils' multicultural understanding is improving. Even the youngest children are able to reflect on and understand feelings and emotions evoked in their learning. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and acquire values based on openness, kindness and fairness. Pupils have excellent social skills and show good levels of maturity, enabling them to be helpful and considerate.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff and pupils establish strong working relationships because teachers manage their classes well. Lesson planning is good and pupils know what they are expected to learn. Tasks and new learning are explained well and there is plenty of praise and positive encouragement. The pace of lessons is lively. Skilful questioning and good use of humour help make learning fun and interesting. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards very well. There is a good range of other learning resources and activities which engage and enthuse pupils very effectively. Information from tracking systems is used successfully to identify and provide for pupils who need additional support. Teachers have high expectations and match work well to most learners' needs. However, some more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. In science it has improved recently and pupils' scientific skills and learning have developed significantly. Pupils now find science exciting.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum matches effectively the needs of most learners. It builds well on pupils' prior attainment and experience, and promotes enjoyment and achievement. Local links and the school environment are used well to enhance learning. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and good use of pupils' skills in these areas in other subjects. The school is now working on embedding and improving such links. Previous weaknesses identified by the school in science and physical education are being resolved successfully. Music, being taught by experts, is now a particular strength. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including visits and visitors, which enliven learning. Clubs and teams extend well pupils' experiences in the arts, sports and across environmental activities, including the class allotments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for child protection and the care of looked-after children meet requirements. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and health and safety procedures are good. Pupils' medical needs are catered for well and those who fall ill are looked after effectively. Pastoral care is excellent. High quality support enables pupils to thrive and be very happy. Should they feel at risk, pupils have great confidence in their teachers and other adults. The school works effectively with external agencies to ensure pupils who have difficulties with learning are supported well. Pupils are informed regularly about how they are achieving but are not always sure about the next steps to improve their standards further. A reason for this is that the marking of some work is either just ticks or lacks specific advice on how it could be improved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good teamwork is a hallmark of the school. Staff are supportive of each other and keen to take on new and exciting challenges. A good example is their involvement in the 'Making Good Progress' national pilot scheme. The school met its targets for 2007 but, because of its

involvement in the pilot, current targets are even more challenging and are a key factor in raising standards and achievement. Since their appointment in September 2007, the new headteacher and deputy have earned respect because they not only lead by example but also trust others to take on responsibility. Staff and pupils are prepared to be accountable because they know their views and ideas are taken seriously. The impact of their approach is evident in the marked improvement in science standards, although some subject leaders are still developing their effectiveness, particularly in relation to their analysis and use of performance information. They are doing so because they are committed to school improvement. This is also true of governors, who use their close links with the school in order to fulfil their roles even more effectively. Consequently, governance is good. Effective leadership and management indicate that the school has a good capacity to drive forward successfully further improvements in the future.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Layer-de-la-Haye CofE Primary School, Colchester, Essex, CO2 0DS.

Yours is a good school. Through your work, and when talking with us, you showed very clearly that your school is based firmly on the Gospel Values, which you know well. You show: Compassion, Wisdom, Respect, Fairness, Responsibility, Courage, Hope and Integrity. We would like to thank you all for welcoming us so warmly.

The following points are some of the things we found are best about your school.

- Your attitudes to learning and towards each other are outstanding.
- Your contribution to the school and your local community is excellent.
- The adults at your school take excellent care of you and look after you very well.
- You have good teachers who work hard to help you make good progress.
- You reach above average standards by Year 6, and achieve well.
- Your headteacher and governors are determined to make sure all the good things about the school continue to develop so your school improves even more.

Your school is involved in an important pilot programme to find new ways to help all children nationally to make better progress. Therefore, we have asked your teachers to do three things to help you in your work and learning.

- Firstly, to ensure all of you become more familiar with your individual targets, and therefore know exactly what to do to improve your work and gain high standards.
- Secondly, to ensure the new and exciting challenges you have been given this year continue, especially in science and for those of you aiming at higher levels.
- Finally, your teachers understand well that continuing to learn is important, even for adults. Some of them want to develop further their own skills in using information to help you to improve. We are encouraging them to do this.

We were particularly impressed by a display of your poetry and art in which you illustrate your individual characteristics. You showed us how active you are in learning and how well you concentrate on tasks. Keep up this excellent approach in order to help your teachers help you to make even better progress.

With all best wishes for your future,

Michael Miller Lead inspector