

Lawn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118264
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312860
Inspection date	5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Overett
Headteacher	Mike Hickey
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
School address	High Street Northfleet Gravesend DA11 9HB
Telephone number	01474 365303
Fax number	01474 534655

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This much smaller than average school serves an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The majority of pupils are White British. However, there are an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. More pupils leave and join the school at times other than is usual, and in the recent past, there have been difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Good pastoral care enables pupils, including those who are new to the school, to feel safe and well supported. Relationships are good and pupils say, 'It is a friendly place, where we feel looked after'. Parents appreciate the way the school looks after their children and takes the time to listen to them. The headteacher has successfully gained parents' trust and, little by little, they are becoming more involved in the school's work. The good procedures for improving attendance are working successfully with the majority of families, but a minority of parents do not send their children to school as regularly as they should. This well below average attendance means that these pupils miss valuable learning time.

Pupils themselves like coming to school and their behaviour is good. They speak enthusiastically about how the curriculum is made interesting through the many visits and visitors to the school. They also enjoy the after-school clubs saying, 'The guitar club is really good fun!' They like their teachers, trying hard to do their best in lessons. They willingly answer questions, knowing their responses are treated with respect. The 'peer mediators' are proud of their work, welcoming the chance to help their friends if they are upset. Pupils would like more opportunities like this to take greater responsibility, for example through the school council. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, even though lunchboxes do not always reflect their understanding of sensible eating.

Enjoyment starts in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). Children settle quickly, making satisfactory progress in the six areas of learning expected for these young children. However, on entry to Year 1, their skills are well below those expected for their age. Although standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress, mainly because of the sensitive targeted support they receive. Pupils' progress and their personal development are satisfactory but low levels of literacy and numeracy skills mean that pupils are not prepared sufficiently well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher knows that standards must rise. As staffing difficulties have been resolved and teaching is at least satisfactory, there are signs of improvement. Monitoring and evaluation activities are satisfactory but expectations have been too low and the focus on improving learning has not been sharp enough. This is getting better as governors and subject leaders become more involved in evaluation activities, considering the influence of teaching on pupils' achievement. All know it is necessary to raise their expectations of what pupils are able to do in order to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress. Assessment procedures have improved since the previous inspection. However, the information is not always accurate and its use is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that satisfactory progress improves to good. Even so, the improvements made since the previous inspection indicates that this school has the satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Despite satisfactory progress in this key stage, few children attain the levels expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. This means the majority of children are not able to tackle

competently the Key Stage 1 curriculum. There are particular weaknesses in children's communication, language and literacy skills and in the calculation strand of mathematical development. Although these are known by the school to be weaknesses, planning does not ensure that children have daily opportunities to develop their skills in these key aspects of learning. High priority is given to children's personal, social and emotional development. This means children are happy, settled and feel safe in school. They willingly share resources and enjoy their learning in both the indoor and outdoor classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise leaders' and teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, in order to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress
- ensure assessment information is accurate and used effectively to plan activities that meet pupils' learning needs
- develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures that focus sharply on pupils' learning
- improve attendance.

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are very low, especially in communication, language and literacy, and their personal, social and emotional development. Progress is satisfactory, but their skills remain well below those expected by the end of the Reception Year. By Year 6, standards have been well below average, except for in 2006, when they were broadly average. However, the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within very small cohorts, and the increasing number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, skews the National Curriculum test information. In addition, a high number of pupils join and leave the school throughout the year, as illustrated by the fact that only two of the 2007 Year 6 cohort had completed all of their primary education at Lawn School. Assessment information shows that the majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stage of learning English, make at least satisfactory progress. However, low standards in reading, writing and mathematics mean that pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the next stage of education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils behave well. There is a calm atmosphere in the school, although some pupils become restless when work given to them does not fully meet their needs. Pupils move around the school sensibly and are polite to adults. After-school activities support their personal development well, and increase their enjoyment of school. Parents agree their children enjoy school; one parent said, 'My child is very happy at Lawn Primary School'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils develop a clear sense of justice and their knowledge of other cultures is improving. They know the importance of being healthy and active, although they do not follow this advice fully. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the wider community. However, as yet, they are not

sufficiently involved in making changes to the school, and older pupils say, 'We would like to have more responsibility'. Pupils know how to keep safe, knowing the dangers of smoking, drugs and speaking to strangers. Despite the school's thorough systems for improving attendance, rates of absence remain well above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are carefully organised and teachers ensure that pupils behave well. The good relationship between staff and pupils is a strength. Good use of praise ensures pupils are confident when responding to questions. They know what they are expected to learn in lessons, but marking does not consistently provide clear advice about good features of pupils' work or how to make their work better. Teachers work productively with their assistants to ensure that newcomers to the school and those pupils with specific needs are able to tackle their activities and achieve satisfactorily. Assessment information provides teachers with information about pupils' attainment. However, this information is not used consistently well. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and where this happens the pace of learning is slow. At times, untidy work and poor presentation is too readily accepted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the links made between subjects help to make the curriculum more interesting. However, this approach is not yet sufficiently well planned to ensure that pupils' skills are developed systematically throughout the school. This is particularly evident in science. The opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in different subjects of the curriculum are improving. The good number of visits and visitors to the school, alongside the good range of after-school clubs, further promote pupils' enjoyment and their health and fitness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has a good understanding of the needs of pupils and their families and the difficulties that some of them face in their daily lives. The care for vulnerable pupils is good. Pupils say they feel safe and secure, knowing the Family Liaison Officer will always help them if they are worried or upset. Pupils who join the school at times other than the usual starting point settle quickly because of sensitive and carefully planned support. There are good procedures in place to improve attendance, which are having success with most families. But, there are still a minority of parents who do not send their children to school regularly which negatively affects their children's education. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are well established.

A thorough tracking system is in place and regular assessments are made of how well pupils are succeeding with their work. This information, however, is not always accurate, and neither is it used consistently well by all teachers to ensure that pupils' progress is as good as it should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides clear direction and he is well supported by the staff. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has successfully improved links with parents, gaining the trust of the local community. Attendance, although well below average, has improved significantly and last year, the local authority target was met by the school. Although monitoring and evaluation is satisfactory, it does not focus sufficiently well on ways of improving pupils' learning; for example, the school improvement plan does not clearly identify how success can be measured against standards and achievement. This limits the school's effectiveness. However, through training, middle management is improving and subject leaders are starting to focus more on evaluating the influence of teaching on learning. Governors fulfill their statutory obligations and are supportive of the school. Their role of challenge, for example asking if standards could be higher, is not developed well enough.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lawn Primary School, Gravesend, DA11 9HB

Thank you for welcoming us and telling us about your school. We think your school is satisfactory, which means there are good things and some things that are needed to make it better. We are pleased that you feel safe in school and that your teachers and other adults help you if you are worried or upset. The 'peer mediators' do a good job in lending a hand to those of you who need help at playtimes. We agree you should have more chances to help each other, for example through the school council. It is good that your parents think the school is a safe place, but we wish that some of them would make sure you attend school more often. You could help by telling them how important it is for you to come to school every day, or else you miss important things in your lessons.

The many visits and visitors to the school we agree make the curriculum more interesting, and the after-school clubs you told us about certainly seem to be good fun. We understand why you like school and agree that the sporting clubs help you take regular exercise. It is good that you know about the importance of eating sensibly. Try to think more about this when you bring your lunches to school, so that you can be a good example to everyone.

In lessons, you answer questions well and you know that adults will listen carefully to what you have to say. Your behaviour is good – well done! You try hard and make satisfactory progress in your work. We would like this progress to be even better, and for you to be able to do harder work in English, mathematics and science. We think your teachers should expect more of you to make sure you learn faster, and to use the information about what you know already to plan activities that really make you all think hard. Also, we would like the headteacher, governors and teachers who are in charge of different subjects to check very carefully that you are all learning as well as you can.

Thank you again for your help. Keep working hard and help your teachers as they try to make your learning better.

Yours faithfully

Lois Furness Lead Inspector