

# Luton Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118318
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	312883
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Davies

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	354
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tony Goulden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jillian Oliver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Luton Road Chatham ME4 5AW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 844149
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 843582

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

### Description of the school

Luton Junior is a large school situated towards the outskirts of Chatham. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and increasing. These pupils have a wide range of needs, including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion with statements of special educational need is above average.

Attainment on entry is falling and is now well below average. The proportion of pupils leaving and entering the school after the start of Year 3 is also increasing. In many cases, those new to the school have low attainment. A large proportion of pupils come from White British families, but many more pupils attend the school from minority ethnic backgrounds than has been the case in the past. Recent arrivals are from Eastern Europe – now the largest minority ethnic group – and from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is currently well above average. There have been some changes to staff recently, including at subject leadership level. The headteacher took up her appointment just over two years ago, and the deputy headteacher joined the school eighteen months ago.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Luton Junior is satisfactory. Its greatest strength is its strong pastoral support for pupils and their families. Indeed, pupils' good personal development is a real achievement for staff and pupils alike. Recent racial tensions within the local community are not reflected in the everyday life of the school, which is orderly and harmonious. Pupils behave well and relationships are happy and friendly. Extensive provision for those pupils with challenging behaviour enables them to benefit more fully from their education and ensures that they do not disrupt the learning of others. Although the school also works very hard to promote and celebrate good attendance, it remains below average. Despite its robust endeavours to make improvements with the very small minority whose attendance is poor, the school has not been able to persuade all parents of the educational importance of coming to school regularly and frequently.

The school's assessment information shows that the large majority of pupils have made good progress since the start of the school year. Indeed, for about a third, progress has been rapid. There are also variations in the rate of progress, however, within and between year groups. As a result, achievement as a whole is satisfactory. Inconsistencies are also present in the quality of teaching, which is often good, but not always. Pupils say how much they like life at school and, when lessons spark their interest and enjoyment, pupils are busy and productive. Indeed, they are really pleased when, after much thought and hard work, the penny finally drops! Improvements to the curriculum mean that activities in English and mathematics lessons are adapted appropriately to meet the differing needs of pupils, and focus closely on developing key skills. Nevertheless, not all lessons have the same degree of pace and challenge as those that are the most successful. Largely, differences in the quality of teaching are because new initiatives have not yet had time to become wholly established. Neither have improvements made sufficient inroads as yet on attainment. Consequently, although pupils in the current Year 6 are making steady progress, standards in this group are still low in English, mathematics and science.

The senior leadership team is a strong and dedicated force and subject leaders are keen and enthusiastic. There is already a wide range of monitoring activities. These give the school a clear understanding of its work and performance in most areas. The school judged its overall effectiveness to be stronger than inspection evidence found largely because it placed too much emphasis on recent improvements without taking full account of their impact so far. Perhaps the most significant of these improvements has been to assessment. The new computerised system allows the school to track pupils' progress, set targets and identify those in need of additional support quickly and easily. This information is discussed widely across the school to ensure that all are well informed, accountable for pupils' progress and increasingly accurate in their assessments. There are well-established arrangements for performance management and good support for newly qualified staff. Nevertheless, routine checks on the quality of teaching are not yet frequent and systematic enough to enable the school to identify and extend the most successful practice, and so ensure that pupils benefit from good teaching every time.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that progress is consistently good or better in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.

- Make systematic checks on the quality of teaching to identify and extend effective practice into all lessons.
- Promote the educational importance of frequent attendance with parents to ensure the good attendance of those pupils who do not come to school often enough.

A small proportion of 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**

Many pupils have made good, and even swift, progress this school year, but progress is still too variable for achievement as a whole to be any greater than satisfactory. Stronger assessment practices and a closely focused programme of planning for English and mathematics largely account for accelerations in progress. In science, the school has turned its attention to providing more practical and investigative activities to increase achievement.

Overall performance in last year's national tests at Year 6 improved on those of the previous year owing to better results in mathematics and science. Nevertheless, the faster pace of progress this year has yet to translate into significantly higher standards, partly because important improvements to provision are too recent to have made a full impact. This is particularly so for the present Year 6, where standards are low. However, the increase in pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with low attainment is also influencing the attainment of every year group. Fine measures of progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities show that they make steady gains in learning, as are those from minority ethnic groups and those learning to speak English as an additional language.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are enthusiastic and positive about their school – a fact recognised and endorsed by responses from parents. They say everyone is kind, a point well illustrated by their warm celebration of each other's achievements during assembly. Clubs are particularly popular and none more so than the Car Kit Club. Pupils recognise that membership of this group is an honour, particularly as they must apply formally to join and be interviewed. Indeed, they like other chances to be responsible, too, such as acting as 'mediators' in the playground or serving on the school council. Although playtimes can be a little boisterous, pupils say that there are no fights. A few parents expressed anxiety about the impact of the recent racial difficulties, but pupils confirm that these local tensions are not replicated at school. Indeed, the harmonious relationships throughout the school, together with pupils' good behaviour, provide an invaluable foundation for learning. In addition, they also give pupils a strong base of social and personal skills for adult life.

Pupils show a good awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet, but recognise that they have yet to put this knowledge routinely into practice in their packed lunch!

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Good teaching takes place in many lessons, but not consistently. Activities are mostly challenging and targeted well towards key skills and concepts that form a basic core of vital understanding and knowledge for use in the future. These strong features are particularly evident in the teaching of English and mathematics. Small group work is effective and enables those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or in need of a boost to keep up with the progress of other pupils.

Good behaviour is a feature of all lessons. In most cases, pupils are wholly engaged in their work, clearly enjoying their activities and keen to get to grips with what they have to do. These qualities are at their best when tasks are practical or give pupils the chance to participate through plenty of discussion as a whole class or with a partner. Lively teaching and skilful questioning draw in many pupils, including those not raising their hands to answer, but this does not always happen. Sometimes too little discussion or too few questions mean that teachers miss the opportunity to gain valuable information about what pupils do and do not understand. Very occasionally, pupils do not make the progress in lessons that they should.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school is keen to develop a curriculum that meets the particular needs of its pupils. A wide range of extra-curricular activities – including many sporting activities – is already doing this. The school's allotment gives those without a garden at home the chance to grow something or, maybe, hold a snail in their hand for the first time. A visit to the local council chamber allowed pupils to gain a first-hand feel of local government in action. Both French and German are available, and the school explores and celebrates other cultures, including the traditions of pupils recently new to the school so that pupils understand and respect each other's backgrounds. Improvements to resources for information and communication technology have raised the profile of this subject, although pupils have yet to be fully involved with the use of interactive facilities in classrooms.

A sharpening up of the academic curriculum has already started to bear fruit in the good progress of many pupils. The school is also eager to capitalise on the natural links between subjects to make learning more interesting and relevant. Planning for these topics is thorough and extensive, although sometimes not fully covered in practice. Links with other schools have been helpful in developing particular subjects, like design and technology.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

While the academic aspect of this work is not yet as strong, it is gradually developing alongside the school's good pastoral care. There is much support for new arrivals and for pupils with a wide variety of learning, social and emotional needs. The close individual attention they receive helps the school's most vulnerable pupils to make satisfactory progress. High levels of exclusions now represent just a handful of pupils, and happen for appropriate reasons. Very recently, carefully phased programmes of reintegration are proving to be successful. Close liaison with parents, and robust action where necessary, gains better attendance from the few pupils who

frequently miss school, but improvement is sometimes short-lived. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and close liaison with many outside agencies, including the local police, form crucial links in the school's network of support. Opportunities for discussion about racial perceptions and bullying encourage pupils to form a mature attitude to these issues. This 'up-front' approach not only helps pupils to feel safe, but also secures their knowledge of how to seek help for themselves should they need to.

Academic guidance is developing and in need of further refinements. Learning targets focus attention on the necessary small steps of learning, but checks on these are not yet consistent. Similarly, feedback to pupils about their work also varies in quality.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The hard work and example of the senior leadership team have been invaluable in creating a calm and orderly school where academic progress has begun to flourish. These factors show secure capacity for further development. The easier access to information about pupils' performance has considerably strengthened the school's ability to gauge its effectiveness. Discussion about this data at all levels holds everyone accountable for improvement. Subject leaders already share monitoring activities with senior staff and their enthusiasm and motivation are currently fired up further by evidence of academic success. Inexperienced members of staff receive good professional support, including frequent checks on their teaching. However, the quality of teaching as a whole is not monitored with the same rigour, thus limiting the extent to which the most effective practice can be sought out and disseminated.

Good liaison between staff and governors allows for debate about a wide variety of issues, big and small. Financial management is good and the school is quick to direct its own resources so that unexpected circumstances receive immediate support, as well as making sure that money is also spent to the benefit of all.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Luton Junior School, Chatham, ME4 5AW

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found out while we were with you. Importantly, your school is doing a satisfactory job. We were pleased to hear that you like your school, especially all the clubs – the Car Kit Club seems to be particularly popular! The large majority of your parents are happy with the school, too. A few were worried about the difficulties between some parents last term, but you confirmed that everyone at school is kind and there are no fights. In fact, you all behave well and this means that everyone can get going with their learning. Your progress as a whole is satisfactory, and many of you have made good progress so far this school year.

Here are some other important things about your school

- You really enjoy your lessons and work hard when activities are practical and interesting and you all have a chance to take part in discussions and answer questions.
- The staff and governors have made lots of improvements and these are helping you to make faster progress, although standards are still low.
- All the staff take good care of you, and make sure that you know what to do to keep yourself safe.
- You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle, but you admit that you could eat more healthy food at lunchtime!

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure that your progress is always good so that you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Check all the teaching very carefully so that the things that help you to learn well are in every lesson, so that teaching is always good.
- Make sure you all come to school regularly and frequently.

With best wishes

Patricia Davies Lead inspector