

Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118343
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312897
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Swainson
Headteacher	Mary Haney
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2004
School address	Lynsted Lane Lynsted Sittingbourne ME9 0RL
Telephone number	01795 521362
Fax number	01795 522516

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a popular, smaller than average village school. There are three mixed-aged classes in Years 1 to 6 and a Reception class. The majority of children's skills on entry to Reception are broadly as expected for their age but vary from year to year. Most pupils are from White British families, but children from several minority ethnic groups, including a few Traveller Roma Gypsy families, are also represented. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and in some of the classes, over two thirds have learning difficulties.

Currently, the leadership and management of the school are shared between a visiting executive headteacher and an acting headteacher. In recognition of its work to promote healthy lifestyles, the school has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lynsted and Norton is a good school. Recent changes have led to a more shared leadership and management team that is keen to move the school forward. The school has worked closely with the local authority and external agencies and has eagerly acted upon the support and advice provided. This has ensured a sharper focus on the main priorities to improve the school further, particularly through raising standards in English. Tighter checks on pupils' progress and good analysis of pupils' achievement in English have led to weaknesses being identified in pupils' reading and writing skills. The curriculum has been adapted to provide greater opportunities for developing a wider range of reading and writing skills. Additionally, better teaching and learning are specifically focused on developing pupils' spelling, reading and writing skills. These changes, and pupils' involvement in their own assessment, have led to measurable improvements. Consequently, standards rose significantly in both Years 2 and 6 in English, and they also rose in mathematics and science in the 2007 national tests. There has not previously been the same strong rigour given to checking pupils' progress in mathematics and science however similar approaches to those in reading and writing are now being developed to tackle pupils' relatively weaker skills in these subjects throughout the school. It is too soon for these to have had a substantial impact on results however school data and inspection evidence confirms that most pupils are on course to meet more challenging targets. Good provision in Reception ensures children get off to a good start. Pupils build on their good achievement throughout the school to achieve above average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6.

Teaching ensures lessons are interesting and relevant and so pupils are eager to learn and work hard. Usually work is well matched to the different abilities within mixed-age classes. On occasion, explanations are not always clear and pupils are given the same tasks, which limits them reaching their full potential. Pupils' personal development thrives in this strong family school and the good quality care and support given provide a good grounding for pupils' future lives. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and say, 'The children's opinions and views count'. Pupils proudly talk about being school councillors and peer mediators and of their involvement in the local community such as the 'Orchard Project'. They show an excellent awareness of leading safe and healthy lives. Pupils enjoy running a healthy tuck shop. Older pupils undertake cycle and first aid training. The curriculum is well balanced, with a good range of different learning experiences. Pupils say they particularly enjoy information and communication technology, drama and French. The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular clubs and activities, from Traveller and science weeks to Spanish and sports clubs. The children are well known to the staff and, because of this, their individual learning needs are met well, especially those with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic groups, which results in them achieving well. Whilst academic guidance is good, pupils are not always clear about their targets, though they appreciate the comments in their work which they say help them to understand what to do to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children arrive with skills that are broadly as expected and most have had some pre-school education. They make good progress in the Reception Year. By the time they begin Year 1, most reach the expected levels for their age and a significant number exceed them. This is because good teaching nurtures their development and positive relationships in this safe

environment. Thorough lesson planning and detailed knowledge of each child's ability ensure they achieve their best. The outdoor area is in need of development but plans are in hand to tackle this. The school has made sure that children's choices to work outdoors and their independence are not inhibited.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that work in lessons is always matched to pupils' different abilities and that pupils are always clear about what it is that they are expected to do
- make sure that all those at leadership and management level check that all pupils do as well in mathematics and science as they do in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average, including for those with learning difficulties. Those from minority ethnic groups generally achieve well, due to the good quality support they receive. Children have a good start in Reception so that by the time they enter Year 1, most children's skills meet expectations and a significant number exceed them. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. By Year 2, standards are above average and pupils achieve especially well in mathematics. National data and the school's tracking of pupils' achievement confirm that most pupils achieve well. Standards in Year 6 are above average. This represents good achievement. The whole-school focus on writing has improved pupils' writing skills, including their spelling and reading. The school is now beginning to tackle pupils' basic skills in mathematics and science with similar resolve. Consequently, pupils' practical and investigational skills are getting better. This is because of the improved quality of provision, more effective teaching and use of practical learning methods, small group work and better use of assessment. Those at risk of underachieving have good specific support to help move them on.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, as seen in the good attendance by the great majority. Although the attendance of a small minority has been a concern, the school works very closely with parents and external agencies and is doing all it can to resolve this. The school has a strong family atmosphere. Pupils enjoy each other's company and readily help one another. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, although their awareness of non-European cultural traditions is just developing. Most pupils behave well because they are interested in their learning. The very few who find it hard to behave are well supported. Pupils report that any bullying is dealt with swiftly. They enjoy responsibilities and have a say in refurbishing the library and improving the school grounds. Pupils raise funds for various charities, and get involved in village events and in the wider community, such as Blossom Day, egg hunts and maypole dancing. This helps them to become confident and independent and prepares them well for their future lives. Their understanding of how to keep safe and healthy is outstanding. Pupils run a healthy tuck shop, enjoy cookery club and eagerly participate in many sports, 'brain gym' and 'Skip2Bfit'. Older pupils undertake cycle and first aid training and show a good level of concern for each other. The personal, social and emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage is good because they are provided with many opportunities to share, talk, play and learn together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In most lessons, teachers plan their work well and make sure that there are appropriate activities for pupils of different abilities. On occasion, however, all pupils are set exactly the same task. As a result, some find the task too easy while others initially struggle. Teachers work in good liaison with support staff and this helps to ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and enjoy very good relationships with their pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour effectively and lessons run smoothly, with pupils being able to concentrate on their work in a calm environment. The use of skilful questioning ensures that learners take an active part in classroom discussions. Most pupils express their ideas in a confident and persuasive manner. Pupils' work is marked regularly, giving pupils good guidance on how to improve their work. These comments are not, however, always linked to pupils' individual targets for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has successfully adapted its curriculum so that it is flexible to meet pupils' needs but with a sharper focus on developing pupils' basic skills. This has resulted in some notable success in improving writing skills. The curriculum has recently been refined to ensure pupils have greater opportunities to develop their reading, mathematical and scientific skills. Though improvement is noticeable, it is too early to show the extent to which these changes have had a sustained impact on results. Nonetheless, the focus on skill development and providing more interesting and relevant learning experiences has, pupils say, made learning 'much more interesting'. This also supports their personal development so well. French is taught from Year 1 to Year 6. A good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs enhance the curriculum. These, and activities such as learning about Traveller culture, all enrich pupils' experiences beyond the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe because they are cared for in a secure, supportive environment. Their teachers know them very well. Policies and procedures to protect pupils and ensure their health and safety are made clear to all staff and are rigorously implemented. Pupils' views and concerns are listened to and acted upon whenever possible. The school works closely and effectively with outside agencies in helping pupils to achieve their potential. Pupils at risk of underachieving and those with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage and effective measures are taken to meet their needs. Specialist advice has been sought to help support the few Traveller pupils so that they quickly settle into school life. Although work is monitored on a regular basis, individual pupils are not always aware of their own targets in each subject. This sometimes prevents them understanding precisely what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School self-evaluation is rigorous and now involves the whole school community, including governors. The management team provide a clear and appropriately prioritised vision for continual improvement of pupils' achievement and standards. Having developed pupils' reading and writing skills successfully, the team is now focused on developing pupils' key skills in mathematics and science. Some improvements are already evident, but it is too soon for these to have had a sustained impact on results. Recent improvements to the school's systems for tracking pupils' individual achievement mean that any who are not making as much progress as they could are quickly identified. Supporting action follows swiftly to help them improve. Effective coordination for pupils with learning difficulties means these pupils have the same good opportunities as others.

Monitoring records of teaching and learning show that senior managers identify strengths and weaknesses effectively and support staff in their development when needed. Issues from the last inspection have been successfully dealt with. Governors are active in the life of the school, generously contributing a broad range of expertise and providing strong levels of support and challenge to help the school improve further. Links with parents are good, and the majority say that the school is led and managed well. Given recent improvements, the school has good capacity to improve further.

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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**

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lynsted and Norton Primary School, Sittingbourne ME9 0RL

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and seeing your lessons. Lynsted and Norton is a good school.

Here are some things we found out:

- you are making good progress in your learning, especially in English
- you clearly enjoy school and gain a lot from the friendship and opportunities provided
- you are looked after well and staff make sure you are safe
- we were impressed with your good behaviour and the respect you show to one another and grown-ups, and we think you work hard
- those of you who find learning difficult are given good support
- you are making some excellent choices about staying safe, healthy and fit
- the curriculum is good and there are lots of exciting clubs and activities, which you told us you really enjoyed
- the school is well run.

Here are some things that we have asked the school to improve:

- make sure that you always know clearly what you should be learning in lessons and that you are set work that is not too easy or too difficult
- make sure that all those at leadership and management level check that you do as well in mathematics and science as you do in English.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and letting teachers know if you do not understand any of your work and by letting teachers know if the work is too easy or too hard for you.

Sheila Browning Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector