

Langdon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118398
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312920
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Logan
Headteacher	Jon Fox
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	East Langdon Dover CT15 5JQ
Telephone number	01304 852600
Fax number	01304 853343

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 small rural school with three mixed-age classes. Year group cohorts are much smaller than in most schools, so standards on entry to the school fluctuates from year to year. Overall, it is broadly in line with expectations for the age of the children. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also varies between year groups and is currently higher than the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Admissions of pupils at times other than the usual point of entry are higher than in most schools.

The headteacher took up his post in January 2006. Shortly afterwards, the local authority considered closing the school. It was agreed in July 2006 that the school would stay open. During the past two years there has been a high turnover of governors and staff. The school now has a stable staff but there are still vacancies on the governing body. The school has achieved the Healthy School award and the Foundation Level for the Internationalism Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but rapidly improving school. It has been through a difficult period in recent years when the pace of improvement has slowed with the possibility of closure, high turnover of staff and governors, and some less-than-satisfactory teaching. Strong leadership from the top and valuable support from the local authority have helped the school to weather the storm and to make rapid progress in tackling its shortcomings. Parents are exceptionally supportive of the school and appreciative of the improvements that have been made. As one put it, 'A very good turnaround for the school in the past two years'.

Following the previous inspection, standards in Year 6 declined significantly and there was widespread underachievement amongst pupils in Years 3 to 6. Decisive action to improve the quality of education for these pupils has resulted in improved standards. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, where pupils receive a good grounding in skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of the curriculum. The school is still working hard to eradicate a backlog of underachievement amongst older pupils in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4, and there is evidence to show that progress is now accelerating in Years 5 and 6. Standards in Year 6 are currently at average levels and the school has set very challenging, but achievable, targets for pupils to rise beyond current standards.

Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have been most affected by the change and disruptions that caused a lack of continuity. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are now satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and good in Years 5 and 6. There are strong indications that the quality of provision is improving in response to training and support for all staff. Pupils with learning difficulties receive sound guidance and new systems for allocating support ensure that it is targeted more accurately to their individual needs. The school provides a rich variety of activities in addition to the curriculum, including sport, drama, art and music. Effective links with other schools and external agencies further enrich pupils' experiences.

The school has successfully established a very positive ethos for learning. One parent described the school as 'a wonderful, vibrant and caring community', while another praised its 'family-orientated caring atmosphere'. These qualities ensure that pupils feel safe and happy and have positive attitudes to learning. The school successfully nurtures pupils' all-round personal development and, as a result, their self-esteem and confidence flourish. Adults know pupils very well and provide good care and support for their health, safety and well-being. Support and guidance for pupils' academic development are improving as new assessment and tracking systems gradually take effect. Nevertheless, these procedures are not yet used consistently enough to ensure that all pupils are given work that accurately matches their needs.

The satisfactory leadership and management are improving. Those relatively new to teaching are in the early stages of developing subject leadership skills and are not yet able to play a full part in improving pupils' achievement in their subjects. Senior staff provide fine role models to inspire and support them and they have made a good start in their allocated aspects of the curriculum. The drive for improvement is now gathering momentum and its impact is evident in pupils' accelerating rates of progress. Rigorous self-evaluation provides an accurate view of the school's performance and clear direction for its future development. Consequently, the school is now in a strong position to pursue its high aspirations for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'My son has settled so well into Reception that he moans when the weekend arrives!' So wrote one parent about her child's experience, and it is easy to see why. Children are happy and enjoy learning because the teaching is planned carefully to suit their individual needs. They make good progress in all areas of learning and most reach or exceed the standards expected by the end of the Reception year. The teacher is skilled at managing three year groups in one class. She ensures that the youngest children have plenty of opportunities to choose their own activities and to learn through play, as well as acquiring basic reading, writing and mathematical skills in a more formal way. Major improvements to the accommodation have greatly enhanced the provision for Reception children. Nevertheless, the lack of a dedicated outdoor play area, soon to be remedied, places constraints on the range of activities that can be offered. In the past, assessments have not always done full justice to the children's attainment, but, after input from Early Years advisers, they are now accurate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that all teachers make effective use of assessment and tracking information when planning the next steps in learning for each pupil.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by developing effective subject leadership skills amongst all teachers.

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

After three years of low standards and underachievement in Years 3 to 6, pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. Good teaching and high expectations in Reception and Years 1 and 2 lead to good progress for these pupils. Standards in Year 2 are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school acknowledges that weak teaching in Years 3 to 6 was the main reason for the decline in standards in Year 6, though the threat of closure and low morale amongst staff have also played a part. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now making satisfactory progress – in fact, progress in Years 5 and 6 has been good since September. Progress is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, but these pupils are not yet making sufficiently rapid strides to ensure they reach the challenging targets that are set for them. Strategies to raise standards in reading and writing have had already had a marked impact on standards in Years 5 and 6 and the school is currently focusing on mathematics and science, where there is the greatest room for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour are key factors in their improving rates of progress. They contribute to lessons with enthusiasm and clearly enjoy all aspects of school life. Pupils say they feel safe and know there is someone they can talk to if they are

worried. They know how to keep fit and healthy and many take advantage of the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because it is given a high priority through the curriculum, in assemblies and as an integral part of the daily life of the school. Close links with local churches enhance pupils' spiritual development. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and pupils' views are taken into account when making decisions about how to improve the school. Attendance rates have risen sharply over the past two years, reflecting pupils' increased enjoyment of school, and are now average. Pupils are prepared adequately for future life by learning to work collaboratively and taking part in team-building exercises. Nevertheless, their literacy and numeracy skills are not yet developed to sufficiently high levels by the time they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are variable in quality but the overall picture is satisfactory. The key to the good teaching for the younger children is very thorough planning that meets the needs of pupils in three different year groups in one class. Frequent assessments give a clear picture of how well pupils are doing and enable work to be matched closely to pupils' individual needs. In all classes, lively and energetic teaching motivates pupils and engages them in active learning. Warm and trusting relationships between adults and pupils help to create a positive atmosphere where pupils can thrive. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning when supporting them in their group tasks, but teachers do not always ensure that they are deployed to best effect during lesson introductions. In Years 3 to 6, teachers do not always use assessment information carefully enough to plan work that provides good levels of challenge for pupils at different stages of learning. This slows progress somewhat in Years 3 and 4. There are inconsistencies in marking as well as some good practice. The good examples clearly show pupils how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is improving in response to new initiatives, some of which are at an early stage of implementation. Teachers are creating increasingly effective links between subjects as the curriculum evolves and pupils have regular opportunities to use laptop computers to enhance their learning. The school has rightly identified the need to improve problem solving in mathematics and investigative work in science, in order to raise standards in these subjects. There is an appropriate range of additional programmes to support pupils with learning difficulties. The school gives a high profile to the arts and sport through its very wide range of extra-curricular activities and special events. Pupils' learning is greatly enriched by themed weeks, drama productions and workshops, partnerships with other local schools and participation in the Internationalism Award programme, which is heightening pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are good procedures for ensuring pupils' health, safety and well-being, while those for academic guidance are satisfactory. The school's family atmosphere helps pupils to feel safe

and well cared for. High expectations of behaviour contribute well to the school's well-ordered and calm ethos. Adults know pupils well and form kind and trusting relationships with them. There are good systems for tracking pupils' progress from term to term, but the use of assessment information to inform teachers' planning is not yet consistently good across the school. Senior staff check each child's progress and discuss this regularly with individual teachers in order to highlight pupils who are not moving ahead at a fast enough rate. Steps are then taken to provide extra support as necessary, although this is not yet equally effective in all year groups. Although staff now set challenging targets for pupils to achieve each year, pupils are not yet involved well enough in setting and reviewing their own 'small steps' targets along the way.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership has given the school a firm steer during the past two years when it has been under the threat of closure and experienced a high staff turnover. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled with determination and there is now a strong sense of optimism amongst staff and governors. This is firmly rooted in a secure knowledge of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. Rigorous analysis of the school's performance leads to carefully planned actions to bring about improvement. The impact of these is evident in rising standards and steadily improving provision. The school has made good use of the support and resources offered by the local authority and changes have been made at an appropriate pace to ensure that they are manageable. Strong teamwork and high aspirations for the future, coupled with challenging targets for all pupils and effective new systems for tracking their progress from term to term, are already having a marked impact on standards in Years 3 to 6. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that further work is needed to accelerate progress in Years 3 and 4. Senior managers are working effectively alongside less experienced colleagues to hone their skills in managing subject responsibilities, but these are at a relatively early stage of development.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	2
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

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	2
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

16 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Langdon Primary School, Dover, Kent CT15 5JQ

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for contributing to the inspection. We were impressed by your good behaviour – especially on that awful wet and windy day! – and we were very pleased to see how much you enjoy being at school. You told us that you especially like all the clubs and activities that you can take part in – but we were delighted to hear that you enjoy the lessons as well. Your school has been through some difficult times in the past two years and for a while it looked as if it may be closed. There have been a lot of different teachers in the junior classes too. Now, things have settled down and your school is getting better all the time. It is doing a satisfactory job and has some good features too. The adults look after you very well and help you to feel safe and secure. The school is particularly good at helping you to grow into confident young people who are able to take responsibilities and contribute to the school and the local community.

Those of you who are in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In the past, some of you in the older classes have not made as much progress as you should have done and you are still catching up. Now, you are achieving higher standards in English, mathematics and science but those of you in Years 3 and 4 still need to make faster progress. One thing that is helping you to do better is the new system for checking on your progress from term to term. We have asked the school to use this information even more to help plan your work so that it moves you on more quickly. You can help by working with your teachers to check how well you are doing.

In a small school, every teacher has to take responsibility for different subjects to make sure they are taught well. We have asked the school to make sure that every teacher is able to play a part in improving what you learn in different subjects. We were delighted to see your positive attitudes towards school and we are certain that you will work with your teachers to achieve their goal – which is to make Langdon a really good school in every respect. They are well on the way already, and with your help they should be successful.

With very best wishes,

Carole Skinner Lead inspector

Annex B

16 January 2008



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Carole Skinner
Lead inspector