

Lamberhurst St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118604
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313011
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Eira Gill

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	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Burrell
Headteacher	Caroline Bromley
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2003
School address	Pearse Place Lamberhurst Tunbridge Wells TN3 8EJ
Telephone number	01892 890281
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased since the last inspection and is now above average. Children's attainment on entry is broadly as expected for their age but varies considerably from year to year. In the last two years, more pupils have joined the school than would normally be expected. The headteacher is relatively new in post.

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 and improving school where pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well. All aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection. In a comparatively short time, the headteacher has been very successful in creating a calm and industrious community where all pupils make good progress. The school is in touch with parents through the weekly newsletter and consults widely with both parents and pupils. There is good evidence to show that the school acts upon their suggestions. Most parents are appreciative of these opportunities to have a say in what happens in the school but a small minority disagree with this view.

Standards of attainment vary year on year because of the different numbers of pupils in each group who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The present Year 6 pupils are making good progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science are average and this reflects the pupils' overall lower starting points. Pupils who are potentially capable of attaining at higher levels and those who find learning more difficult are all achieving well. A good start in the Reception year helps children settle quickly. They make good progress. Good leadership and management have resulted in effective teaching and learning for all groups of pupils. Strengths in teaching lie in the generous number of assistants, good behaviour management and strong relationships. Most teachers demonstrate effective skills of assessment and quickly give extra help to pupils who have not grasped the learning intention of a lesson. Occasionally, pupils' lack of understanding and misconceptions are not picked up quickly enough through teachers' questioning during, and at the end of, lessons. This slows pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development is good. A few parents have concerns about bullying but this is not being justified by the pupils' views. Pupils really enjoy being at school and their behaviour is often exemplary. For example, one said, 'It's fun to do science in groups.' School council members take their responsibilities very seriously. Their response to the school's efforts to help pupils lead healthy and safe lives is excellent. One school councillor said, 'We enjoyed working out how we could improve the menus and asked if we could sit with our friends to have lunch together.' These initiatives have resulted in more than doubling the numbers of children who have a school lunch. Pupils respond equally well to opportunities to take exercise. They attend the many after-school sports clubs with enthusiasm. They are very aware of their own safety and that of others, and talk about the special zones on the playgrounds that indicate whether activities will be quiet or energetic.

Pupils' contribution to the school is good. They have organised concerts to raise money for charities. They say, 'We get to show off our talents.' Attendance is average. The percentage of authorised absences has been above average but is now beginning to level out following very clear guidelines sent to parents to discourage them from taking holidays in term time.

The curriculum is good with outstanding enrichment. There are numerous sporting, creative and musical activities, plus French. Pupils enjoy being in the orchestra and the choir and take part in inter-school sports matches and music festivals locally. Talented children are given opportunities to succeed. For example, several 'Able Writers Days' are organised annually. Care of the pupils is good. Staff at all levels care deeply for the children and work hard to support them in their social and emotional development. Well organised provision for pupils with significant needs ensures their good progress. Several parents wrote appreciative comments such as, 'A nurturing environment. Our child has made many friends and is thriving. A friendly welcome from all members of staff at all times.' Academic guidance and support are good

overall although not all pupils can remember their day-to-day targets in English and mathematics because they are not referred to often enough in lessons and when teachers mark their work

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Because of the good care provided for them by teachers and the skilled assistants, practically all children settle quickly and make good progress. Good links with pre-school provision also help the children overcome any anxieties. One satisfied parent commented, 'The teacher and assistant ensure my child progresses well in what seems a busy, fun-filled learning environment.' The majority of children meet or exceed the early learning goals. Teachers are particularly skilled in organising activities that enable children to work together amicably. The quality of teaching is mainly good and activities usually well planned. Children work well together in pairs to decide how to spell simple words and their learning moves on rapidly. This reflects the work that has gone into ensuring children's enjoyment of learning and the effective use of resources. Although the outside learning environment is used efficiently, a better match with the areas of learning will encourage children's independence further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers adopt effective questioning skills to assess more accurately pupils' understanding and misconceptions during, and at the end of, lessons.
- Ensure that all teachers refer to pupils' day-to-day targets in English and mathematics, when appropriate, during lessons and in their marking.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry varies year on year. It ranges from average to below average. These variations mean that standards fluctuate in Years 2 and 6 when pupils take part in national assessments and tests. In 2007, standards were above average in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science whereas, this year, standards are average. However, pupils achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points. The introduction of smaller teaching groups in the morning sessions is proving to be a successful management initiative in improving pupils' progress. Challenging targets are met and improved tracking systems show that all groups of pupils are making good progress including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very aware of the high expectations of all staff and this leads to good moral development. Occasionally, a very few pupils with behavioural problems do not pay enough attention to their teacher but the skilled assistants are quick to step in and ensure that the learning of all pupils is not affected. Pupils' cultural development is good as a result of visits from artists and dance groups that reflect the multi-cultural nature of modern society. Spiritual development is good and evident in the harmonious atmosphere and learning environment, in lessons on music and art and in links with the church. The children in the Reception class work well together and enjoy good relationships. This was very evident when they helped each other to write simple words on their small whiteboards. The walking bus encourages pupils to walk

to school from home and for those that travel by car to 'park and stride'. The staff, children and their parents plus members of the local community demonstrated their understanding of ensuring a healthy lifestyle by taking part in a whole-school hike last July. Pupils' successes are celebrated by the school and help to promote their confidence and ability to show initiative and independence, preparing them well for the next stage of their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is generally good throughout the school. Lessons are well organised with clear learning intentions. Pupils generally waste no time and are eager to get on with their work. There is plenty of enjoyment evident. Most teachers make very helpful suggestions to improve pupils' progress and pupils were better able to interpret the sophisticated language of a poem after they had created 'pictures in their heads' of the Owl and the Pussycat at sea in a Year 3 lesson. Occasionally, however, teachers are not quick enough to spot those pupils whose understanding is not secure and pupils do not always ask for help. A few pupils give an indication, using the thumbs up sign, that their learning has been successful when, in fact, their progress has not been as good as they believe.

Focused training to improve the skills of teaching assistants has resulted in effective support given to those pupils who need additional help with their learning or have behavioural difficulties. Books are well marked with care and accuracy but teachers do not always comment on how well pupils are reaching their short-term targets in English and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that contributes well to pupils' good achievement. The high priority given to French, music, art and sporting activities is contributing very effectively to pupils' personal and emotional development. The choir and orchestra perform regularly and all pupils in Years 4 and 5 have been learning the viola. There is a very wide variety of activities after school including art clubs organised by support staff. Pupils appreciate the effort the school makes to invite organised groups to set up science and drama workshops. The use of information and communication technology has improved well since the last inspection but its use is not yet evident in all subjects. Good links with other providers ensure that the school can extend what it offers to all pupils, including the gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures and effective links with pre-school providers ensure that children in Reception make a confident start. Child protection protocols are fully in place and effective. Health and safety procedures are robust. Procedures for ensuring good attendance have tightened up and improvement is evident. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they agree that the school cares for their children well.

Pupils feel secure and trust all adults. The progress of pupils who find learning difficult is monitored well with appropriate targets and leads to good achievement. Academic guidance for other pupils is good. There is evidence of effective day-to-day target setting for pupils in

both English and mathematics. Following a recent survey, leadership responded quickly to pupils' requests to have fewer targets. However, not all teachers refer to them in their marking comments and not all pupils remember them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher involves all staff fully in this small school and there is a team approach to management issues. The capacity for further improvement is good because of effective professional development and very clear direction from the headteacher. Several improved systems are now in place. The efficient tracking programme is already proving an effective tool to identify any pupils who might be lagging behind. Leaders monitor and evaluate the school effectively and all groups of pupils are now making better progress and meeting the challenging long-term targets. The improvement plan is based on good self-assessment although intended initiatives to secure improvement are for one year only. The headteacher has been very successful in re-organising the morning routines to provide small group teaching in year groups. Pupils in all groups are now moving forward faster in their learning. Effective monitoring of lessons and 'drop-in' visits from the headteacher have resulted in improved teaching and learning in all year groups. Governors are effective and prepared to challenge the school. They are involved in all aspects particularly in finance, where they use their expertise to ensure efficient use of teaching resources, such as the funding of smaller teaching groups in the mornings.

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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	3
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	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	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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lamberhurst St Mary's C of E (VC) Primary School, Lamberhurst, TN3 8EJ

Thank you for welcoming us so politely to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you. You were very sensible and friendly in the way you answered our questions and spoke to us about your school. Yours is a good school and you are rightly proud to belong to it.

- What works well in your school:
- Your headteacher, senior leaders and the governors take good care of you and make sure teaching is good.
- Your behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. For example, in assemblies.
- You have good attitudes to your work and you really enjoy school.
- You all have an exceptionally good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe.
- You make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Those of you who find it a little bit more difficult to read and do mathematics are making good progress with the help of your teachers and all the assistants.
- You have a very wide choice of clubs to go to after school and good opportunities to do well in sport and music.
- The way you take responsibility, for example those of you in the school council, have worked to improve the school in many different ways. Well done!
- I have asked the headteacher and governors to do the following things to help you make better progress:
 - Ask teachers to question you more carefully during, and at the end of, lessons to make sure that you have fully understood your learning.
 - Ensure that teachers mention your targets in English and mathematics, during lessons and in their marking.

You can help, too, by asking your teachers for help if you do not understand something and by asking them to tell you how you can improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Eira Gill ? Lead inspector



17 March 2008

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Lamberhurst, TN3 8EJ**

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Yours sincerely

Eira Gill 😊
Lead inspector