

Langafel Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118711
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313057
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Gould
Headteacher	Sandy Turner
Date of previous school inspection	17 February 2003
School address	Main Road Longfield DA3 7PW
Telephone number	01474 703398
Fax number	01474 709683

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a little larger than average but pupil numbers have fluctuated and are lower than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught in mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is high because the school includes a specialist unit for autistic pupils. The headteacher was appointed in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Langafel provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It prides itself on being a happy school where all are included. That is certainly recognised by pupils and their parents. One typically wrote, 'Both my children love their school and from day one were made to feel welcome and cared for.' Good care and support help pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Another parent, describing the encouragement given to their child who was nervous about starting school, explained that 'as a result, he has come out of his shell and excelled.' A notable strength is in the care taken to ease children's transition from their pre-schools to the Reception Year. Parents describe how their children are 'involved at every stage and made to feel special.'

Pupils enjoy the broad range of subjects they are taught. They especially like the way the curriculum has been made more relevant and interesting by increasingly linking subjects together. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, though happily none follow the prescriptive advice of one lad that 'you shouldn't eat more than 50 calories a day'.

What particularly stands out about Langafel is the very good provision for the pupils in the autistic unit. Parents strongly appreciate this. One typically described their son's 'unimaginable improvement' since starting at the school. 'His achievements have been life-changing and I have absolutely no doubt that this is due to the unwavering support, care and structure that he and I have received from the staff at the unit.'

Throughout the school, standards are broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress because the teaching is sound. Teachers know and get on well with their pupils. They make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to involve pupils and engage their interest. They do not all, however, match work closely enough to the range of abilities in their class. This has been recognised by school leaders, and improvements over the past year have helped to increase the number of pupils attaining higher levels in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6. Nevertheless, work is often still too easy for some and too difficult for others. Though pupils are generally well behaved and eager to learn, older pupils report that they are sometimes bored in lessons and this occasionally 'leads to mucking about'.

The headteacher has a very clear and accurate view of how well the school is doing and of where improvements are needed. She is ambitious for the school's success and has introduced several initiatives aimed at boosting pupils' learning and the progress they make. Staff and leaders at all levels share her vision, but not all follow up new schemes with sufficient rigour or evaluate their effectiveness in terms of their impact on raising standards. For example, class teachers are each now expected to clearly identify pupils who are not making as much progress as they should and to explain why. All identify the 'who', but not all record the requisite explanation, and this information gap has not been closed. Nonetheless, the recent initiatives and accurate self-evaluation demonstrate the school's sound capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Within a safe, stimulating environment with high quality resources, the Foundation Stage provides what parents describe as, 'A good balance between the importance of learning and the importance of play'. Children join Reception with broadly average skills. They make satisfactory progress during the year so that they move into Year 1 with skills that are close to national expectations in most areas except writing and calculation. Progress in personal, social

and emotional skills is good because of the many opportunities children have to work and share together and the good relationships that exist between children and staff. The key strengths of the Foundation Stage are the very good liaison which it has with parents, who feel fully informed, and the very well-developed arrangements for smoothing children's introduction from pre-school to school. Parents say, 'This is down to the school getting involved with pre-school and inviting children into school for assemblies and open days'. The successful liaison, particularly with the pre-school that shares the school site, has led to a more consistent approach to teaching methods and assessment.

What the school should do to improve further

- More closely match work in all classes to the different capabilities of the pupils.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels follow up the school's initiatives to raise standards and evaluate their impact and effectiveness.

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

The broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science represent satisfactory achievement. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils generally make the best progress in mathematics and do least well in writing. The autistic children in the unit make especially good progress because they benefit from very good support that is carefully tailored to their needs. This is not so much the case for other pupils with learning difficulties, for whom the work in lessons is sometimes too difficult. More-able pupils have not always done as well as they should, but an increased number of pupils attained the higher levels in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests in 2007. This is a result of school leaders' focus last year on setting these pupils more challenging work. They now make satisfactory progress but they do not do better because their work is often still too easy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, and especially in the Reception classes, pupils develop their personal qualities well. The school's commitment to inclusion and tolerance and the raising of self-esteem promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour in class and around the school is good, although older pupils report that there can be some silliness in lessons if they get bored. Pupils are polite, considerate of others and respectful. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school because 'it is fun and you easily make new friends'. Pupils work independently and are confident about expressing their own opinions. They feel safe because they are certain that they will be supported by staff who will help to sort out problems. The good range of sporting activities and fitness sessions and the focus on healthy eating promote pupils' good understanding of the need to make healthy lifestyle choices. Through paired and group work they develop a good ability to work with others in a team. Pupils' key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. They enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities, for example, through the school council, where they suggest ideas and make their own decisions. They like being able to make a difference and know that staff listen to their views. Attendance is satisfactory. The school

makes every effort to encourage good attendance but some families persist in taking holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well as individuals and get on well with them, and this helps motivate the children to try hard and volunteer answers to questions. Teachers make good use of ICT to engage pupils' interest and support their learning. They increasingly set out learning intentions at the start of lessons to explain to pupils what it is that they are expected to learn, and with success criteria so that the pupils can work out how well they are doing. However, too often in lessons pupils are all expected to learn similar things and do similar work regardless of their capabilities. This limits their progress because it means work is too easy for the more able and too hard for some of those who need extra help. As school leaders have identified in their own monitoring of lessons, the effectiveness of teaching assistants varies quite widely. Some provide high quality support to pupils throughout the lesson but others can be too passive, particularly when the teacher is addressing the whole class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school benefits from first-rate facilities that include generous classroom space, a gymnasium and a swimming pool. These are used well to provide varied activities that stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm and so contribute to their good personal development. The introduction of topics and projects that link different subjects together has given pupils practical experiences that make the curriculum more exciting and enjoyable, although these developments are too recent to have resulted in significant improvements in standards. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, and older pupils organise an imaginative array of lunchtime clubs for younger ones, ranging from cheerleading to war gaming. Parents say, however, that they would like more enrichment activities catering specifically for gifted and talented children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents voice strong praise for the way in which the school 'works hard to create a happy and caring environment'. Good relationships that have been forged with its feeder pre-schools help ensure children's seamless integration into Reception. There are thorough procedures for keeping pupils safe. Welfare staff and those in the unit make themselves readily accessible to parents and pupils, and have built strong links with external agencies that ensure pupils and their families receive the support they need. Because their needs are so closely monitored, the work set for autistic pupils is matched very well to the next steps in their learning. Academic guidance and support is not as well embedded for other pupils. Although all pupils are set targets for their learning, they do not always know what they are. However, marking is good because it is detailed and helps pupils to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led by a determined and enthusiastic headteacher who, as parents recognise, 'has already made some positive changes'. The quality of teaching is closely monitored and steps have been taken to tackle weaknesses. There is a shared sense of determination to improve the school among staff and governors. Detailed plans for improvement set out a clear strategy to raise standards but staff and governors are not all focused enough on evaluating the effectiveness of the school's various new initiatives and driving improvement in all aspects of its work. Several of the staff with subject leadership responsibilities are new to their roles. The school takes good account of parents' views and responds well to suggestions made by them. They are invited to comment and contribute through the school's award-winning website. However, some parents were unhappy about the move this year to mixed-age classes and it is principally they who say, 'Communication between school and parents could be better'.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	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?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Langafel C of E Primary School, Longfield, Kent DA3 7PW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We think your school is giving you a sound education. The school provides especially well for the children in the unit.

We were pleased to see what a friendly and happy place your school is. You enjoy all the interesting things you get to do in school. You are all looked after well and we were impressed with your enthusiasm and how well behaved you are most of the time. A few of you told us, though, that there was sometimes some messing about in lessons when you get bored. We think this is because work in lessons is sometimes too easy for some of you and too difficult for others. We have asked the school to improve this, and we think this will also help you to do better.

Your headteacher has made lots of changes and we have asked the school to make sure that all the staff look carefully at the work you do and the changes that are made so they can check that they are all helping you learn better and reach higher standards.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and doing your best, and by making sure you know and concentrate on achieving your targets.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Best wishes, Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector

Annex B

28 September 2007

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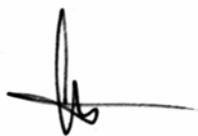
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Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Selwyn Ward', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Selwyn Ward
Lead Inspector