

Long Melford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124707
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315030
Inspection dates	14–15 April 2008
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Aldhouse
Headteacher	Mrs S Hoskin
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Cordell Road Long Melford Suffolk CO10 9DX
Telephone number	01787379929
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Long Melford Primary is smaller than most schools of its type. The large majority of pupils are of White British background and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. Of these, most experience speech or other language difficulties or an identified behavioural difficulty. Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

The school is seeking re-accreditation as a Healthy School and also holds the Sports Council's Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Long Melford Primary is a good school and the headteacher, staff and governors aim to raise its performance to outstanding. The school achieves good value for money. Care, guidance and support are good and the school's powerful Christian ethos is shown in its extremely caring relationships amongst and between staff and pupils. Whenever opportunities arise, for example, pupils will make up prayers for each other's well-being and for their teachers.

Strong teamwork is contributing extensively to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Attitudes towards everyone who enters the building are respectful, helpful and polite. Pupils wholeheartedly accept advice and teaching about what is good for them, such as eating healthily and taking exercise. This excellence extends to partnerships beyond the school itself. In questionnaires, parents demonstrated overwhelming support for what the school does and provides. They believe they are well informed about their children's progress and are involved in a fruitful partnership with staff. Inspectors endorse this fully. A typical comment stated, 'I asked my daughter if her school was good, she said 'of course - fantastic'.' The staff make highly effective use of the expertise available from outside agencies and from a group of local schools to which Long Melford belongs, ensuring that their own skills and knowledge include recent ideas and developments. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their enjoyment of school is at a high level and attendance is above average. Pupils contribute unstintingly towards helping with routines in their classrooms and in helping to run activities smoothly. They are also very generous in their attitude towards charitable fundraising and those less fortunate than themselves.

Good leadership and management ensure that provision is evaluated accurately, so improvements are made where necessary. Good teaching and learning, based on a good curriculum help to ensure that all pupils thrive and achieve well. An area for development is to improve an aspect of the teaching in the Nursery, so that more links are made between the areas of learning in lessons.

The school's many good qualities have contributed to standards that are above average in both key stages. Pupils' achievement is good. There are improved marking systems used by staff and more detailed use of assessment information. So far, this is particularly evident in English and mathematics. In mathematics, for example, pupils' problem solving has been effectively identified for improvement. Teachers acknowledge that it is the headteacher's expertise in monitoring and analysing performance that has largely brought this about. For this reason, the development of such skills in all staff has been prioritised. In turn, subject leaders are keen to improve their roles and contributions to raising standards across the curriculum. The aim is to take rigorous monitoring and analysis into all subjects and use what is learned in one subject to benefit others.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision means that most children are on target to meet nationally expected goals and some are on target to exceed them by the end of the Reception year. Bright displays inside and well-planned activities outside inspire children to make progress in all areas of learning. In the Nursery, teaching in the area of personal, social and emotional development is particularly strong. Allied to the very good examples of working together provided by all the adults present,

children develop very well in this area of their learning. Nevertheless, there are times when they do not progress as fast as they might in other aspects. This is because teachers sometimes miss opportunities to ask questions about numbers, vocabulary or understanding of the world when these are not the central focus of the activity. However, children's experiences in the Reception are constantly peppered with questioning that addresses all areas successfully. As a result, children develop skills on a broad front, whatever the activity.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop subject leadership, so that what is found to be effective in raising the performance in one area of the curriculum is applied consistently to all.
- Ensure that, in the Nursery, as many opportunities as possible are taken to develop children's knowledge and skills across all areas of learning, whatever activity is chosen or planned.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and pupils make good progress. Pupils' achievement by the time they leave in Year 4 is good. The picture is similar in Year 2. Since 2003, results of national assessments have exceeded national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The only exception was 2006, when results dropped to a little below average. As starting points for several pupils were lower that year, their progress and achievement were nevertheless still good. Support for those who find learning more difficult than others is strong and includes the help that they need to reach their own individual targets. Their achievement is good. While pupils' spelling and punctuation are often of a high standard in their English books, this is not consistently the case when they write factually in, for example, religious education. Standards in the arts are very strong. Artwork on display around the school is of a good and sometimes of an inspirational standard and pupils' singing is lively and tuneful. Skills developed in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, combined with a very positive work ethic, prepare them well for the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their attitudes towards school and each other are very positive indeed. Pupils are remarkably friendly, polite and very welcoming. Their enthusiasm for school is very evident in their desire to talk about how good it is. Almost all the older pupils volunteered to train as play leaders, so they could contribute to the organisation of playground games for younger ones. They produced very good ideas of their own during a training session, working very enthusiastically. Members of the school council have been influential in changing break and lunchtime arrangements, canvassing the views of other pupils and running a healthy tuck shop. Pupils raise funds for charities, which benefit the local and international community. They say that they feel safe and that adults in school are quick to help them if necessary. Many take part in sporting activities, which, as one boy said, 'keep us fit'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say they like school because '...lessons are fun and just about hard and easy enough at the same time.' Evidence during the inspection supports this view. Teachers often plan problem-solving tasks based on real situations, such as bus timetables in Years 3 and 4. These activities absorb pupils because they see them as relevant and exciting. Teachers tell pupils what they will learn. Pupils therefore know what is expected and try to achieve it. Teaching assistants provide good support for those who find learning hard. Parents and Year 4 pupils make an effective contribution to the development of reading skills in younger pupils. Marking is conscientious and often provides pupils with information about how to improve. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to restrict comment to the main subject of the lesson. This means that opportunities are sometimes missed to correct, for example, spelling or organisation and presentation of work in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Subject leadership has not yet resolved this shortcoming in what is provided.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. What is planned and taught meets pupils' needs well and fully meets statutory requirements. Pupils learn French in Years 3 and 4 and have opportunities to learn a musical instrument. All benefit from swimming lessons in the school's own pool during the summer term. The quality of artwork around the building is at times inspirational, indicating a very strong art curriculum. The school provides an extremely effective programme of personal, social and health education. Enrichment activities are plentiful, including visits to museums, local places of interest and the local middle school. Work is adapted to support pupils who find learning difficult. However, provision for gifted and talented pupils, although currently being developed, is not yet as strong. Good links with other schools ensure a smooth transfer of pupils at the end of Year 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a very caring and supportive environment, which results in happy pupils who clearly see their school as a big family, reflecting its Christian ethos. Teachers are excellent role models, who demonstrate their teamwork in front of pupils who, in turn, are keen to treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves. Parents speak highly of the school's care, guidance and support. In questionnaires, some expressed the view that this is because the school supports them too, when necessary. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust. Academic care and guidance are good, based as they are on good procedures for tracking pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics, although not always as effectively in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership ensures that the school runs smoothly and that pupils of all backgrounds feel safe and valued. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' achievements is accurate and information is used effectively to adapt teaching and the curriculum. For example, changes in how work is marked and how pupils' rates of progress are tracked have ensured above average standards, demonstrating good improvement since the last inspection. Subject leaders acknowledge that these changes are not yet complete in all areas of the curriculum, so the impact in some subjects is not fully apparent. Governors know the school well. They support and question effectively, accepting a brief for particular subjects and sometimes providing direct support in classrooms. Based on its good record since the last inspection and the strong teamwork of headteacher, staff and governors, the capacity to improve further is good.

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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

16 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Long Melford Church of England Primary School, Long Melford, CO10 9ED

Thank you for your helpfulness and outstanding behaviour when Mrs Lowery and I inspected your school. This includes the very youngest in the Nursery. We want you to know that we enjoyed meeting you and think that your work is of a good standard. Your attendance is good too. Those of you we spoke to, including your school councillors, said that they like school. They think that it is a good place to be, because the teachers help you to learn many interesting things. We agree with this. Your teachers plan well and include the subjects and skills that they should. All the adults take very good care of you.

Here are some more reasons why we agree that Long Melford Primary is a good school.

- In reading, writing and mathematics especially, your teachers keep a close check on your progress, so they can make sure that it is good.
- Your teachers set you a very good example of working as a team and you follow their lead very well. This makes your school like a big family where you work hard and play together outstandingly well.
- Your headteacher, the staff and governors manage the school well, so it runs smoothly. You are willing to help them, carrying out routine jobs in your classrooms, serving in the tuck shop and training to be playground leaders.
- What is taught is rich and varied and includes opportunities for you to start learning French and to take up a musical instrument.
- Your teachers have a very good partnership with your parents, which helps you to learn.

Here are two ways for your headteacher, staff and governors to make Long Melford even better than it is already:

- help the Nursery children to learn more skills
- improve the leadership of subjects, so that what is found to work well in one subject is used in others, so that you can make even faster progress.

You can help the school by supporting your teachers and continuing to work as hard as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W Paull

Lead inspector