

The Leys Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117364
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326587
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	363
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joy Jackson
Headteacher	Mrs Cheryl Salmon
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ripon Road Stevenage SG1 4QZ
Telephone number	01438 314 148

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Inspection number	326587

Fax number

01438 721 364

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Leys Primary and Nursery school is much larger than average. Most pupils are White British with small numbers from a wide range of other ethnic groups. The number of pupils whose first language is not English has increased recently; the proportion is now similar to most schools. Around 7% of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has decreased and is now just above the national average, while the number of these with a statement of special educational needs is close to average. The school hosts two units that are run by the local education authority, one to support pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and one that does outreach work for pupils with specific learning difficulties. A pre-school playgroup is on the site from which 10 to 15 children enter the Nursery each year. Children enter the Nursery with well below average standards of attainment. The school has been awarded the National Healthy Schools Initiative for a number of years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Leys Nursery and Primary School provides a strongly nurturing environment where pupils are cared for very well. Many parents commented on the good environment in school and caring and approachable staff. The school gives a satisfactory education. Children enter the nursery with poor skills of literacy and numeracy. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so when they enter Year 1, many are working at the standards expected. Progress throughout Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, but varies from class to class and accelerates in Year 6. Boys do less well than girls. National test results have risen over the past few years and are broadly average at the end of Year 6. The strong provision for pupils' personal development ensures they enjoy school and make good progress in social skills. They leave with a good understanding of how to live a healthy and safe life.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is some inconsistency across classes. Strengths are in relationships and as marking of work has been a focus of staff development, marking usually supports pupils' academic development. The strong curriculum with its wide range of enrichment activities contributes effectively to pupils' personal development. It is well matched to the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. These pupils progress well as the provision for them is good as do pupils for whom English is an additional language. Attendance is below average but the school works extremely well with parents to encourage their children to attend and attendance has risen recently. A number of children enter school at different times of the year and these children are very well cared for so settle quickly.

The headteacher delegates effectively by playing to the strengths of her leaders, so the leadership team is strong. It has worked to raise academic standards but the impact of this work is not yet seen in the achievement of pupils, partly because new initiatives are not always monitored for the difference they are making. The school has a great deal of data about pupils' achievement but this is not in a readily accessible form. The areas for improvement from the last inspection have been soundly tackled. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve because leaders know the school well and are using professional development skilfully to raise standards.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision and leadership are effective and children are getting off to a very good start to their learning and development. The school has made good progress on implementing the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework. It has forged positive relationships with parents and pre-school settings so that children settle quickly and enjoy school. Parents are pleased with the provision.

Pastoral care is very good. The school supports children effectively and arrangements to ensure the daily health, safety and welfare of children are very thorough. Children are enthusiastic and work confidently and happily, learning to co-operate with adults and each other. They understand routines and behaviour is good because adults have very high expectations and manage the children well. This contributes to good progress in their personal and social development.

Effective procedures are in place to check on children's progress and these support the good progress made by most children. Some boys do not do as well because they lose interest quickly,

especially when the pace of the lesson slows. However, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement closed in 2008. Planning regularly involves children so that they start the process of being involved in their own learning early. Teaching motivates and challenges most children well. By the time they enter Year 1, many children are close to normally expected goals. Children who find learning difficult are well supported so that they make good progress. Those who are learning English as an additional language make rapid progress because of the strong focus on visual and oral stimuli and play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of achievement across the classes.
- Produce a concise analysis of data that leaders and teachers can use to raise achievement.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of all initiatives on the achievement of pupils.

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

Standards at the ends of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average and there are early indications that the school's new approach to literacy is supporting improvement in standards of reading. Pupils make steady progress but progress varies from class to class, sometimes excellent but at other times slow. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils who find learning difficult, such as those with emotional difficulties, make good progress because effective assessment and support ensures that work is well targeted to their needs. Similarly, those for whom English is a second language progress well because resources to support their learning are used thoughtfully and effectively. A higher proportion of boys underachieve than girls. As yet, the school does not have a consistent approach to raising boys' achievement, although teachers are aware of the issue and some choose resources that will motivate both sexes. The strategy of appointing male role models is successful, as seen in the dance clubs, attended by a number of boys who enjoy the classes and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of the diversity of cultures within their own community and in the wider world, for instance through their link with a school in Gambia. They make a very good contribution to the school community through the school council, which has been involved in raising money for charity as well as improving facilities in the playground. Members of the council have taken responsibility in their class or around the school, for example in clearing litter. Older pupils act as mentors and 'buddies' to younger ones. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to stay healthy both through eating and exercise. Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. Although attendance is still below the average for primary schools, it is improving because of the efforts the school is making to promote it, for instance by discouraging holidays in term-time. Behaviour is generally good and the school has clear strategies for managing it when it is inappropriate. Pupils are developing sound basic skills for later life, particularly in learning to work together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching and learning in all parts of the school, but they are not sufficiently consistent to ensure good progress by all pupils. Where teaching is good, pupils understand clearly the objectives of the lesson and how they will know if they have been achieved. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use a good range of strategies to match their different learning styles. They involve all pupils by the way they direct questions. They also give pupils good opportunities to discuss and develop their ideas with each other, and to evaluate each other's work. Throughout the school, teachers' marking of pupils' work offers them clear targets to help them improve when they next approach a similar task. When teaching is not as good, the teachers do not make sufficient use of the data available to them to assist them in planning the next stage of work or to set pupils' targets which will extend them fully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a broad curriculum which meets the needs of different groups of pupils well. It makes good provision for those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language. There is an appropriately strong focus on literacy and mathematics. Good links have been made between some subjects, with writing being developed, for example, through history and science. The school has been innovative in its approach to modern foreign languages, by introducing pupils to Chinese and Japanese as well as teaching French throughout the school. In addition to the comprehensive programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education, the presence of specialist units for pupils from across the county who have learning or behavioural difficulties has contributed well to the personal development of all pupils. The school has enriched its curriculum by means of a good range of visits to places of interest, including residential trips for pupils in Year 4 and Year 6. It has also invited visitors to the school, including a theatre group, and provided expert specialist teaching of dance and physical education, as well as a wide range of clubs, including origami and choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Relationships and pastoral care are strengths within the school. Adults know pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. Staff have a high level of commitment to their well-being and there is very good support for all pupils, including, for example, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with English as an additional language. The enrichment group gives particularly good support to children with high emotional needs. External agencies are used very well to help vulnerable pupils and those needing additional help with their learning so that they often make good progress. Particularly good use is made of the on-site units to support pupils' learning. At the time of the inspection, all systems to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare needs met requirements. Pupils and their parents think the school is a safe place to be. Arrangements for smooth transition into the school are effective. This is particularly valuable for the significant number of pupils who enter and leave the school on a regular basis in all year groups and those who have experienced educational systems in other countries. Academic

guidance has improved since the last inspection because many teachers give good guidance on how work can be improved through targets. However, this is not yet a consistent strength.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team has a complementary range of strengths and has used these well to identify what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve. The self-evaluation accurately reflects the school and has been used to introduce a range of initiatives to raise achievement, but these have not always been monitored for their impact. However, the latest initiative to improve pupils' skills of reading is being monitored and is showing early signs of success. The school has a wealth of data but it is not easy to interpret so leaders and teachers do not always use it. Subject leaders have developed competence and confidence in their roles as a result of professional development. The work has not yet made pupils' progress consistent across the school.

Governors are supportive and the new chair has developed systems to monitor the school's work. For example, there is a new form that guides governors when they visit the school. The school effectively reaches out to the community and engages different groups in its work. One example is the programme set up by the school, in conjunction with a local college, to train parents, some of whom are out of work, to become teaching assistants.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. Some of its initiatives are bearing fruit, but a lack of consistency in teaching and in monitoring has slowed progress.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

9 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Inspection of The Leys Primary and Nursery School, Stevenage, SG1 4QZ

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about your school and particularly appreciated the time given to us by representatives of the School Council. A special thank you to children in the nursery for the shape biscuits you kindly sent us to try. They not only looked attractive because of the different shapes, but tasted delicious.

We agree with you and your parents when you say that you enjoy school and are well cared for. The staff work hard to make sure that you feel safe and happy and to make lessons enjoyable. We were impressed by how much you know about how to live a healthy life and we saw several of you keeping fit through your lunchtime dance clubs. You behave well and are polite to one another and to adults. Most of you make the progress you should be making although in some classes, you make better progress than in others.

Mrs Salmon and the inspection team agreed on three things your school needs to do to make sure that you do as well as you possibly can.

- Teachers are going to work closely together to make sure that all of you make good progress.
- Mrs Salmon and your teachers have a lot of information about how well you are doing. They are going to look more closely at how they can use this better to help you with your work.
- Your teachers are always looking for new ways to make your work interesting. They are going to examine which of these helps you to learn most effectively.

It was a great pleasure to work in your school. We would like to wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweddell

Lead inspector