

Luddenham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118342
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326809
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Jane Chesterfield

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	218
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	Richard Woodroffe
Headteacher	Mark Croly
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Luddenham Faversham ME13 0TE
Telephone number	01795 532061
Fax number	01795 590016

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and is located in a remote rural setting served by a school bus. Few pupils at the school are eligible for free school meals, and few are from minority ethnic groups. There are no pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The difficulties are mainly moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also below average. The school has the Activemark Gold and the FA Charter Standard awards. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school's Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Luddenham Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well. It is very highly regarded by their parents. They value the wide range of opportunities which the school offers their children to enable them to find their strengths and their confidence in themselves. One parent typically commented, 'There is always a calm and relaxed atmosphere where children feel happy to learn and develop as individuals.' Another felt that, 'The school has a balanced approach to children gaining academic qualifications, whilst offering plenty of opportunities for other skills to be developed.' The headteacher has a very firm commitment to this approach and gives the school very good, clear leadership to achieve this goal.

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. They enter Reception with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age and make good progress to enter Year 1 with above average standards. The good progress continues through Years 1 and 2, and pupils reach well above average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6, including those with moderate learning difficulties. Although standards at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated since the last inspection due to variations in the cohorts, they were well above average in English, mathematics and science in the 2008 National Curriculum tests. The school has a determined attitude to improvement and is not complacent about its performance. It has tackled weaknesses in science robustly, for example, and reached very high standards in last year's tests. The school has rightly identified that some more able pupils are capable of achieving more, particularly in mathematics, and that boys could do better in writing. It has set about addressing these issues.

Pupils' achievement is good because they are well taught. Teachers know their classes very well and have very good relationships with them. They set a good pace to lessons and explain clearly to pupils what is required of them. The needs of more able pupils are not always well met, especially in mathematics, and sometimes they are expected simply to do more work, rather than more challenging work, than the rest of the class. Pupils enjoy a well-rounded curriculum with good coverage of a wide range of subjects, coupled with outstanding opportunities to discover their skills and develop their talents through, for example, music, art or sport.

Thanks to these outstanding opportunities and excellent pastoral care, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are extremely happy at school because they feel so safe and valued. 'Staff trust you and let you do things,' said one. Pupils are very keen to take on responsibility and to help others. Their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Older pupils are always ready to take care of younger ones, and show consideration for their needs. Parents comment very favourably on the family atmosphere of the school and pupils feel pleased that the headteacher knows everyone's name. The school is working to improve the consistency of its guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

The success of the school is down to the direction given by the headteacher, ably supported by senior staff, to provide all pupils with a well-balanced education. There is a commitment to enabling all members of the school community to achieve their best. Staff are encouraged to develop their specialisms and share their interests with the pupils. There is a focus on continuous improvement, for example, in updating tracking systems to provide senior staff and subject leaders with better information on pupils' progress. Systems for self-evaluation and school development planning are good, and identify future priorities accurately. Senior leaders have

a good understanding of where the school is and what it needs to do to improve further. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for future improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class is a warm and welcoming environment where children receive a good start to their education. Although their skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with those expected for their age, they are lower in language and numeracy skills. The children make good progress because their learning is carefully observed and monitored. Staff plan a good range of exciting and stimulating activities covering all the areas of learning. They are successfully developing strategies to encourage the children to become more independent and think for themselves.

The importance to staff of children's welfare is demonstrated by the close links they have formed with parents and outside agencies. This means support for children with particular needs can be quickly provided. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, and promotes consistently good practice. Planning is well organised and is informed by careful observations which assess children's progress. Tracking data are well used to accelerate learning. The outdoor area is used imaginatively, and the children are encouraged to make their own decisions about whether they want to play inside or out. Role play is encouraged and this helps the children to make good progress in their speaking and listening development. There are good links between Reception and Year 1 to help children settle easily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the level of challenge for more able pupils in mathematics.
- Support boys to develop the skills to reach the higher levels in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in Reception and Years 1 and 2, so that by the time they reach the end of Year 2 their standards are well above average. They are not quite so high in mathematics as in reading and writing, because fewer reach the higher levels. They achieve well because they get a good grounding in the important skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and have a secure foundation to build on as they go into Year 3.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to achieve well. Last year there was an improvement in standards in the end-of-Year 6 tests, after a dip in 2006 and 2007. These variations reflected differences in the capabilities of the cohorts, and progress was good. Results in 2008 were very high in science and well above average in English and mathematics. Pupils' attainment was better in reading than in writing, and fewer pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics than in English. The school has identified the need to provide greater challenge for more able pupils in mathematics. It is also working to help boys learn the techniques which will enable them to reach the higher levels in their writing, for example in their choice of vocabulary and sentence structure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their behaviour is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to learning, work eagerly and share with one another. They are exceptionally conscious of their own safety and that of others. They establish very positive relationships based on politeness and mutual respect amongst themselves and with adults. These contribute greatly to the atmosphere in the school which is friendly and purposeful. Pupils' eagerness to be at school and make the most of everything it has to offer is reflected in their attendance figures, which are above national levels.

The school council represents the pupils well and takes its responsibility seriously. Pupils know their concerns will be listened to by staff. Pupils of all ages are very keen to do their bit for the school community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils learn about and respect the views, values and beliefs of others, and show a mature attitude to cultures different from their own. They have an outstanding understanding of healthy lifestyles and make sensible choices at lunchtime. The fitness awards won by the school demonstrate pupils' enthusiasm for being active. Pupils' above average standards in literacy and numeracy, and particularly their excellent social skills, mean that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching in the school is good and means that pupils learn well throughout the school. All teachers have very good relationships with their classes and high expectations for their behaviour. They plan and prepare their lessons very thoroughly and make good use of resources. Interactive whiteboards have a very positive impact on learning in the classrooms where they have been installed. This was especially evident in a music lesson where pupils composed incidental music to match the action in a 'Tom and Jerry' cartoon. In some lessons, though, teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work to meet the needs of the more able pupils, especially in mathematics, so they are not stretched as much as they could be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum achieves a good balance of subjects, enabling pupils to learn a wide range of skills. There are particular strengths in art and music, which make the school a vibrant and colourful environment. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum, and this is especially successful in religious education, where pupils write thoughtfully about different faiths and cultures. Sometimes pupils, especially boys, do not always make the most of these opportunities, because the tasks set are not well enough matched to their capabilities. Evidence of this was seen in history and geography work.

Pupils enjoy excellent additional opportunities at Luddenham. They develop their observational and analytical skills through art appreciation, for example, and the range of residential visits helps them to become independent and learn to cooperate with one another. Younger pupils enjoy 'pirate camp', for example, in the safety of the school site. Pupils can showcase their talents in musical or dramatic productions or represent their school in many different sports.

Those who have other interests such as gardening or visiting galleries also find their tastes comprehensively met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall, because staff know the pupils so well and are committed to ensuring their well-being at all times. Pastoral care is excellent. A child-alert agenda item at each staff meeting, for example, means all staff share and exchange knowledge about pupils regularly. Health and safety are monitored regularly and procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are carefully tracked and as a result they make good progress. There are close links with outside agencies where necessary. Systems for tracking absences are thorough and have resulted in attendance improving markedly.

Marking across the school is always positive and supportive but sometimes does not give pupils clear guidance on what they need to do next to improve. Similarly, although there are some good examples of pupils being encouraged to evaluate their own work, particularly lower down in the school, this practice is also not consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school benefits from the clear vision of the headteacher, which is shared by staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork and of shared aims. Subject leaders work hard to improve their areas. There is very good evidence of the impact of strategies to improve results in science, and the leaders of English and mathematics know what needs to be done to make further improvement in these subjects. New tracking systems are beginning to provide more focused information on the progress of individual pupils, but it is too soon for the impact of these systems to be fully apparent. Senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school meets challenging targets and is committed to enabling all pupils to fulfil their potential. The school works hard to promote community cohesion, despite its isolated location, making sure that pupils have a good insight into other communities locally, nationally and globally. Governors are supportive of the school and are developing their role in challenging and holding it to account successfully.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/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?	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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Luddenham Primary School, Faversham, ME13 0TE

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We agree with you that Luddenham Primary is a good school and we could see that you are happy there.

You have opportunities to learn new skills and talents through all the many extra activities on offer, and we know how much you enjoy these. You are doing well in your lessons, because your teachers know how to make your work interesting so that you learn quickly.

We were very impressed with your outstanding behaviour in school and in the playground, and we saw how well you all get on together. The staff take excellent care of you, and those of you who need extra help are well supported.

The headteacher and his staff run the school very well, and want to make it even better in future. We have agreed that they are going to make sure that you all have the chance to achieve as well as you can, particularly in mathematics and in writing. Your teachers are going to make sure that everyone has work that is right for them in lessons, and that no one has work which is too easy.

You can help by telling your teachers if you find your work too easy or too hard, and by letting them know if you finish your work before everyone else. Well done to you all, and best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jane Chesterfield

Lead inspector