

Longford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124074
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328043
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Krishan Sharma

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)	351
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	Craig Squire
Headteacher	Emma Stote
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ascot Drive Cannock WS11 1PD
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Longford is a large primary school. Pupils come from predominantly White British backgrounds. Of the very small number of pupils coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, none has English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The turnover of pupils is considerable. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is offered in Nursery and Reception classes. Within the school premises, there are before- and after-school clubs, which are managed by the governing body of the school. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark, Extended School Award, Inclusion Quality Mark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. A new headteacher took up post in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Longford Primary is a satisfactory school. Most parents are happy about what it provides for their children. Since September 2008, the new headteacher has brought about a sense of urgency to the work of the school. One parent typically noted that 'the new headteacher is starting to bring different ideas, which the school needs'. The recently identified priorities for development reflect the strong desire of staff and governors to improve areas where its provision is weaker. While the impact of the recent initiatives is yet to be felt fully, the steps already taken show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. It has dealt satisfactorily with many of the issues raised in the last inspection. Strong links with other schools, local support services and sports networks are used well to promote pupils' learning and well-being.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most reach at least average attainment on entry to Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards in recent years have been below average, particularly in writing. This is because, due to some past weaknesses in teaching, the good gains made in the Early Years Foundation Stage have not always been built upon. However, achievement in Key Stage 1 is now improving. Most pupils are on course to reach the nationally expected standards, except in writing which remains a weakness. As the senior leaders recognise, more needs to be done to improve pupils' progress during Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach broadly average standards, but do better in mathematics and science than they do in English. This is because their skills in writing remain a relative weakness. Overall, however, their achievement represents satisfactory progress from their starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and is at its best in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 but weaker in Key Stage 1. Pupils enjoy being at school and most attend regularly. A small amount of persistent absence still remains a challenge for the school and also for parents, whose cooperation the school is actively seeking. Personal development is good and is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and their attitudes to their work. Most pupils understand the need to eat healthily and participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities, including those provided after school. The curriculum is satisfactory and caters for the needs and interests of pupils in most lessons. Pupils are caring and show it through raising funds for good causes in the community. Their competence in basic and personal skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Good pastoral care ensures that pupils feel safe at school. They are given satisfactory guidance to improve their work, for example, through comments made when it is marked.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The emerging management structure clearly reflects the headteacher's determination to distribute leadership and accountability. Currently, middle leaders make a limited contribution to monitoring and evaluation in the school and their monitoring skills are insufficiently developed. Governors support the school well and are becoming increasingly aware of the need to strengthen their monitoring of the school's work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with levels of skills slightly below those expected for their age, particularly in literacy. Most of them make good progress in all areas of learning, although

writing is not as strong as other aspects of literacy. They get off to a very good start and the well established routines help them to settle quickly. Children's personal development is a very strong feature of the provision and, as a result, children grow in self-confidence and conduct themselves responsibly when making choices in their work. Relationships are excellent and reflect the importance staff attach to children's welfare. As staff take very good care of children, they feel happy and secure. Children develop a good understanding of keeping healthy and active. Despite the limited opportunities for outdoor play and some lack of resources, staff plan activities that children find interesting and enjoyable. A good balance is struck between activities that adults lead and those initiated by children themselves. Regular assessments ensure that children's progress is tracked and suitable next steps in their learning are planned. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Parents are treated as true partners in their children's education and are welcomed into the early years unit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in Key Stage 1 so that pupils make good progress and build on the good start they get in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing across the school to ensure standards at least match the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Strengthen the monitoring role and skills of middle leaders to enable them to play a fuller role in the school's self-evaluation.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall but they make uneven progress as they move through the school. Whereas most of them make good progress during Key Stage 2, it is slower, although mainly satisfactory, during Key Stage 1. This is because teaching in this key stage is not as strong as in the rest of the school. The school cites, with some justification, the disruption caused by staff absence as one of the reasons for this legacy of underachievement. The current tracking data and pupils' written work show that achievement is beginning to improve because the headteacher has recognised it to be a priority. Standards are rising and most Year 2 pupils are now approaching the national average, although there are some middle and higher ability pupils who could do better. Pupils who need additional support are making satisfactory progress overall. Across the school, pupils do particularly well in science. Their achievement in writing is weaker than in other aspects of English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school and this is reflected in their good behaviour and attitudes to work in most lessons. Pupils feel safe and bullying is rare; pupils say if this does occur, it is dealt with promptly. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and thoroughly enjoy their energetic 'Huff and Puff' sessions in the playground. Pupils form good relationships with their peers and adults. Their spiritual, moral and social development is strong. The school recognizes that more needs to be done to improve pupils' understanding of other cultures. Pupils make a

positive contribution to the local community by raising funds for worthy causes and by taking part in local projects such as planting a flower bed in the town centre. They contribute to the school community through the work of the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching varies and this is reflected in the uneven progress pupils make over their time in school. Teachers plan to cater for the needs of pupils of all abilities and are mostly successful in achieving this in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 classes. Occasionally there is not enough challenge for the higher attaining and middle ability pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2. When this happens, some of these pupils make slower progress. Teachers make their expectations clear. As a result, pupils show good attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons. During the more effective lessons, teachers bring to bear their good subject knowledge through skilful questioning and challenge pupils to do better. As a result, in these lessons pupils make good progress. Pupils work well with their peers and discuss their work with confidence. Occasionally, introductions to lessons are too long and, as a result, limit the time available for pupils to practise their skills independently. The teaching assistants adequately support pupils who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum rightly focuses on developing pupils' literacy skills, particularly their understanding of phonics. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes in subjects across the curriculum. A planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), educational visits, visitors to school and extra-curricular clubs, all contribute to pupils' personal development and their achievement in the basic skills. Pupils particularly appreciate joining in breakfast- and after-school clubs because they offer them a range of opportunities for staying healthy and developing social skills. The introduction of modern foreign languages and environmental awareness are enjoyable additions to the curriculum. Provision for developing information and communication technology (ICT) skills is sound, although more needs to be done to increase its use across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good because all staff are strongly committed to it. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and understood by staff. Regular checks of health and safety procedures and risk assessment are made. Pupils say they feel safe at school in the secure knowledge that staff will listen to any concerns. The school continues to tackle persistent absence rigorously, which largely results from the frequent movement of a few pupils. The support for vulnerable pupils, including those with specific additional needs is sound and ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress. When appropriate, specialist services are used well to add to the school's own provision to support these pupils. In general, marking and the use of personal targets provide good guidance for pupils to improve their work. However, there are occasions when marking is superficial and pupils lack understanding of their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has worked hard to improve the effectiveness of the school. She has led the way in establishing priorities that are focused on improving pupils' achievement, standards and their personal development. However, sometimes plans lack clear measures for checking the effectiveness of new initiatives. The tracking of pupils' progress is managed well and is assisting the school in setting realistic, but increasingly challenging targets. In general, the school's self-evaluation is accurate, although the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning do not always focus on the progress pupils make in lessons or in their written work. As yet, middle leaders play a limited role in the monitoring of their areas of responsibility and their skills in undertaking this role are underdeveloped. The school has taken satisfactory steps towards promoting inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding, and the local and wider links it has nurtured are beginning to contribute to community cohesion. Governors are supportive of the school and their role as critical friends is beginning to take shape.

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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	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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**

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longford Primary School, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 1PD

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome. We enjoyed talking to you, visiting your lessons and looking at your work. We would like to say a special thank you to members of the school council who willingly shared their views with us. I am writing to tell you what we found.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress because adults there provide rewarding activities for them.
- You behave well and show good attitudes to your work in lessons.
- You get on well with each other and with adults in the school.
- Your teachers and other adults in the school take good care of you.
- You enjoy taking part in many of the extra-curricular activities that are offered during and after school.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are all keen to make the school even better and build on the strengths it already has.

This is what we have asked the governors and the headteacher to do.

- Make sure that those of you in the Years 1 and 2 classes build on the good start that you get in Nursery and Reception.
- Give you more opportunities to improve your writing skills in English lessons and through other subjects.
- Improve the skills of leaders in the school to help them keep a close check on work in areas for which they are responsible.

You can all help by continuing to work hard in all that you do. On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the very best for the future.

Your faithfully

Krishan Sharma

Lead inspector