

Leiston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124594
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328171
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cathy Cossey
Headteacher	Mrs J Croft
Date of previous school inspection	December 2005
School address	King George's Avenue Leiston Suffolk IP16 4JQ
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons, and held meetings with staff, pupils, and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, records of their progress, teachers' lesson plans and school development plans as well as 21 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- why girls, pupils eligible for free school meals and those identified as needing extra support with learning attain standards below the equivalent groups nationally and what the school is doing about this
- whether outstanding care is leading to outstanding behaviour
- the impact of support in nurture style groups
- the quality of provision and the outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is an average sized first school serving Leiston and surrounding areas. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free schools. Most pupils are White British with a very small proportion from mixed heritage and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Most have English as their first language. The proportion identified as needing extra help with their learning is around average. The current headteacher took up the post in September 2008. The school is to become a primary school with children up to the age of 11 and is forecast to almost double in size as a result. The school holds Investors in People status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Active Mark. It expects to achieve the National Healthy Schools Standard by the end of the spring term 2009. Children start school with skills and knowledge much lower than expected for their ages. There is a children's centre adjacent to the site. At the time of the inspection the children's centre was based in a room in the school while repairs were being carried out to its own building.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a school in which children and their families feel cherished and involved because of the ethos established and cultivated from the top. There is a real sense of community. Leaders and managers know the school well. They have maintained its good overall performance since the last inspection and improved some aspects of its work. They have clearly identified its strengths and areas for development and how best to achieve them which means that it is well placed to continue improving. One parent wrote, 'I feel the school is well led and is being managed brilliantly by Mrs Croft', indicating that the headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of parents since taking up her post.

A particular strength of the school is the exceptionally high quality of care that staff show towards the pupils and their families. This outstanding caring ethos results in all staff having the individual needs of each pupil at the heart of all they do. The school has developed a flexible nurture style group to accommodate the needs of the pupils most in need of support with their personal, social and emotional development. This, coupled with the very effective deployment of teaching assistants to work with individuals and small groups, ensures that all pupils thrive at school. Staff go out of their way to give pupils the skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics. They also do an excellent job in building pupils' confidence, sense of personal responsibility and belief that they can achieve. Consequently, behaviour is excellent and not a minute is lost in lessons because pupils are keen to do well.

The pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning, coupled with consistently good teaching, lead to them making good progress in their learning and reaching the expected standards by the end of Year 4. Lessons include tasks and resources at different levels of difficulty for the range of abilities within a class. However, lesson plans do not identify precisely enough what each ability group needs to learn in order to build upon earlier learning. Very effective support for pupils who need extra help with their learning means that these pupils also make good progress both academically and socially. However, the targets in their individual education plans are insufficiently precise or measurable to enable the progress of these pupils to be tracked accurately.

The school has recently changed the criteria for including pupils on its list of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, the number of pupils on this list has risen dramatically. These pupils reach standards at the end of Year 2 in line

with similar pupils nationally.

Pupils' understanding of the wider community and of the diverse nature of contemporary British society is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that individual education plans contain small, precise and measurable steps, with clear timescales for completion, for children to aim at.
- Devise and implement ways to give children first hand experience of the diversity of British society.
- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by consistently identifying in lesson planning differentiated learning outcomes for each ability group within the class.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. One parent commented, 'my children love going to this school, even if they are ill they still want to go'. This leads to excellent behaviour and attitudes and a very harmonious atmosphere within lessons and around the school. Pupils settle very quickly to tasks and concentrate very well. They pay very close attention to their teachers and to each other. This was illustrated well in a Key Stage 2 class where one pupil demonstrated on the interactive whiteboard how to resolve a mathematical problem. Her lengthy explanation was comprehensive and detailed yet there was not a murmur from the rest of the class as she made it. This was typical of the behaviour inspectors saw throughout the inspection and was a major contributory factor to the good learning that was consistently seen in lessons. The inspection found no evidence of different rates of learning for boys and girls in lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who need extra help with their learning also make good progress. The result is that overall standards by Year 4 are close to those expected of that age in reading, writing and mathematics. Singing in assembly was of a good standard and there is high quality art work on display around the school.

Not only do pupils enjoy lessons, they also love taking on responsibilities around the school, as school councillors or helpers at play times. They make an effective contribution to the school community and are increasingly involved in the wider community through events such as singing at local concerts. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. The school's own surveys of pupils' views confirm the inspection findings that they feel exceptionally safe and well cared for in school. Links with local organisations like the fire service help them to understand how to keep themselves safe. Their spiritual, moral and social development are particularly good. They learn about their own and other cultures, although there are too few opportunities for them to meet and mix with people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The school provides a good range of activities that capture pupils' imagination and fire them with enthusiasm. These include plenty of opportunities to visit places of interest like a local museum which supported their history topic. As well as a good range of learning activities within lessons, pupils enjoy an extensive range of after school clubs which are attended by around eight out of every ten pupils in Key Stage 2. A very strong focus on personal, social and health education ensures that pupils' personal development is particularly good and that they are ready and eager to learn.

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Staff have such good relationships with the pupils that lessons flow smoothly in a calm and peaceful manner. Tasks are set at different levels to suit the different abilities within a given class or group. Teachers tell pupils what they are to learn in the lesson and refer to this throughout to check on who is confident with the learning and who needs extra support. Lesson plans tend to have one overarching learning outcome rather than identifying the specific learning that each ability group needs to maximise its progress. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They work very effectively with small groups or individuals either within a classroom or in one of the many extra spaces that staff use around the school.

The school has comprehensive systems for checking how well pupils are learning in literacy and numeracy. These ensure the early identification of those who need extra help with their learning. Once pupils who need extra help have been identified the school provides the necessary support.

The school is exceptionally good at caring for and supporting pupils and their families. The headteacher has very quickly gained a deep insight into the nature of

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

the local community, its strengths and its needs. The staff go out of their way to involve parents in their children's learning. During the inspection nearly all the parents from one class attended an afternoon session to find out how the school helps pupils to learn about relationships. The pupils then joined them and they worked through activities together. This is the kind of approach that parents appreciate as their feedback to the school showed. Excellent links with other agencies and experts help the school to identify and meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is no doubt that leaders at all levels are committed to continuous improvement. Even though several are new to their current responsibilities they have a very clear understanding of how well the school is doing and are keen to take it to the next level. The attitude of the headteacher to the inspection as a useful developmental tool epitomises her thoughtful and dedicated approach to whole school improvement. She has worked hard to gain the respect of her staff and build a cohesive leadership team, all pulling in the same direction for the sake of the pupils. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are supportive and increasingly confident in challenging the senior leaders to account for the school's performance, though they know they have still more to learn. They have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fully implemented and that the school has rigorous and robust systems to ensure pupils' welfare. The really strong focus on respecting each person in the school as a unique individual helps to ensure that all have equality of opportunity to be involved in the full range of school activities and that discrimination of any kind is exceedingly rare. The school has good systems for checking the quality of its work and the headteacher is keen to keep refining and improving these in order to take the school to the next level. The governors and staff have a very clear understanding of the community the school serves and have prepared a policy on promoting community cohesion based upon the school's existing good practice. However, the policy is very new and the school has not had time to evaluate its effectiveness.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1

Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although children start from a very low base in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make excellent progress throughout Nursery and Reception. They leave the Reception class still not having reached the goals expected for their age but they are very well prepared for their next steps. The innovative transition class of Reception and Year 1 children helps ease the transfer of those who are still not quite ready for the move into Key Stage 1 at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff check regularly how well individuals are learning so that they can guide them to appropriate activities to build on their learning most effectively. There is an excellent balance between teacher-directed and child chosen activities and a seamless transition between working indoors and outdoors. This high quality provision is the result of excellent leadership based on a comprehensive understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and a commitment to meeting each child's learning and welfare needs.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1

Views of parents and carers

All but two of the inspection questionnaires were wholly positive about the school, reflecting the findings of the school's own surveys. Although one parent commented that there should be stronger action on bullying, the comment went on to say that this is dealt with better than previously. Two thirds of the parents' responses strongly agreed that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and only two disagreed. The inspectors found no evidence of bullying or unacceptable behaviour and pupils did not raise this issue. The questionnaire responses were very positive about pupils enjoying school and feeling safe which confirms what they told inspectors. On the question of whether the school is well led and managed 19 of the 21 replies strongly agreed, while the other two agreed with the statement.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



13 March 2009

Dear children,

Inspection of Leiston Primary School, Leiston, IP16 4JQ.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school a little while ago. We enjoyed our time with you and were sorry we could not stay longer. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school during our visit.

We found that yours is a good school. You learn a lot and reach the standards you should by Year 4. You do some lovely art work and your singing in assembly was good too. Your teachers give you interesting things to do so that you enjoy school very much. You have a lot of clubs after school and most of you attend them. Your behaviour is excellent and you work very hard in lessons. The older ones help to organise play time activities so that everyone is happy. Children who find learning hard get lots of help so they make good progress too.

There are three things we would like your teachers to do to make your school even better. We would like them to make the targets they set for those who find learning hard much clearer so that you can tell when you have achieved them. We have asked the teachers to find ways that you can meet people from different cultures and backgrounds so you can learn from them. We have asked teachers to say in their lesson plans precisely what children of different abilities need to learn in each lesson instead of having one learning outcome for the whole group.

We think your school is well placed to get even better. We were particularly impressed by the way the adults look after each of you and encourage you to look after each other. You can help your school to get better still by continuing to work hard, care for each other and trying your best all the time.

Yours sincerely

Ian Nelson
Lead inspector

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