

Larkhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126202
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	328466
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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)	240
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	Simon Upton
Headteacher	Stephen Norton
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wilson Road Larkhill Salisbury SP4 8QB
Telephone number	01980 652318
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Larkhill is an average-sized primary school. Nearly all the pupils come from military families living on the army base. The need for these families to move frequently means that pupils join or leave at various times throughout the year. Very few complete the whole of their primary education at the school. Around 10% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, about half of whom speak English as an additional language. A well above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry varies considerably, but is generally well below that usually found. At the time of the inspection, Reception children were attending part- time. The school holds the Activemark and Sports England Mark awards. An independent organisation runs the before-and after-school care and holiday club. This setting was not inspected as part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Larkhill Primary is a good school where pupils are very keen to learn and make good progress in both their academic and personal development. This is due to the good quality provision and effective leadership and management.

Pupils' good achievement ensures that standards are around average by the end of Year 6 and they gain an effective range of skills to help them in their future life. Good attention is paid to individual pupils, so those who have learning or language needs achieve as well as their classmates. Progress in reading is very good, especially in the younger classes where the new programme for teaching letters and sounds is having a very positive effect on learning. Achievement in writing and mathematics has risen over the last 18 months.

With the support of the local authority, the school moved forward rapidly in the last academic year. This support is no longer in place, but staff and governors continue to drive improvement well. The headteacher willingly takes on new challenges and works hard to meet them, and leadership and management at all levels are good. The senior leadership team, together with phase and subject leaders, plays an effective role in helping to move the school forward. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive and fulfil their duties well. The quality of provision and the progress of pupils are both monitored effectively so that the school has an accurate picture of where further improvement is needed. Areas of relative weakness are being successfully addressed. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

An outstanding feature of the school is the way that it takes full account of the specific needs of pupils from army families. The level of care provided for pupils and their families is excellent. There are especially good links with the Army Welfare Service which are being enhanced by the work of the new family link worker. The school is particularly good at building a cohesive school community of pupils from diverse backgrounds. Induction procedures, not only for Reception children but also for the considerable number of pupils who join throughout the year, are excellent. Those pupils who are leaving to move on to other schools are equally well prepared. Pupils and their families are full of praise for this aspect of the school's work. One parent commented, 'I would rate this school as the best my child has attended for all-round care and education.' The school works hard to maintain a very good partnership with parents. As one parent said, 'I don't just feel like another parent, I feel like part of the school community when I am in the school grounds.' The parent teacher association is very effective in raising funds to enhance resources, for example to provide benches for pupils to use at break times.

The curriculum has been well adapted to engage pupils' interest and to successfully build on and extend their skills. These strengths, together with the high level of care, have resulted in pupils having excellent attitudes to school. Teaching is good overall, and in some cases, outstanding. Pupils like their teachers very much and agree that lessons are fun. The introduction of more challenging activities has helped pupils make better progress in writing and numeracy in most lessons. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to work with different groups, so pupils who need extra help are supported well. Teachers are generally very good at engaging pupils and motivating them to work hard, although occasionally the pace of learning slows when pupils spend too long on a task. The school recognises these inconsistencies and is keen for all teachers to acquire the skills of the best. Pastoral support is good. The school regularly reviews behaviour management systems to ensure they remain effective, and adults are excellent role models. As a result, behaviour is outstanding and relationships between pupils and with

adults are especially good. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully, especially in English and mathematics. This helps staff to intervene swiftly to provide special programmes of work to help pupils catch up. Pupils are set challenging targets to help them do better and given good advice on how to achieve them. Those pupils who have specific learning or language needs are supported well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children benefit from the high quality induction procedures that help them settle in well. The environment is welcoming, safe and secure, enabling children to thrive. As a result, children enjoy school very much and develop excellent attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is very good and they gain confidence and independence. On entry to Reception, standards in key language, mathematical and social skills are generally well below average. Progress is good, however, and very good in developing early reading skills, although standards remain below average by the time children enter Year 1.

Staff keep a careful check on children's progress, with regular observations of how well they are doing in various activities. This allows teachers to plan effectively for the next steps in learning and to set challenging targets. There is a very good focus on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills and the outdoor environment is used well to support learning. Teaching is good. Adults are skilled at planning tasks that engage children's interest, for example in counting objects associated with Christmas. When given the opportunity, children choose activities and select resources responsibly.

The provision is well led and managed. Links with parents are good, one commenting how friendly and welcoming the school is. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning and to visit the classroom regularly, especially to share in reading activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on and extend the strategies put in place to raise standards in writing.
- Enhance the quality of teaching by providing opportunities for all staff to gain the high quality skills seen in some classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

High pupil mobility means that it is not possible to gain a clear picture of progress from national test data. However, the school's comprehensive evidence of pupils' progress indicates achievement has risen over the last 18 months and is good across all year groups. By the end of Reception, standards are below average. Standards have improved by Year 2, and by Year 6 they have reached the national average. In all year groups, standards in reading are higher than in writing and mathematics, although the school is working successfully to narrow the gap.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Moral and social development is excellent and pupils grow into mature and confident young people. They support and care for each other very well and are adamant that everyone at school is friendly and helpful. Pupils' exemplary behaviour and excellent attitudes to learning make a major contribution to their progress. Pupils have many opportunities for spiritual reflection

and gain a good understanding of the different cultures and backgrounds of pupils who attend the school.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep healthy and safe. They very much enjoy the sporting activities, some of which are organised by personnel on the base. Pupils contribute well to school life, often as a school councillor or as a 'buddy' to younger pupils, and recognise their responsibility to the wider world by fundraising for less fortunate communities. However, the school's location on an army base limits the opportunities to take part in community events. Pupils' great enjoyment of school means that they are very keen to attend. The school is very good at helping pupils who take term-time holidays as the result of their parents' overseas deployment to catch up on work they have missed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Some teachers enthral pupils by their imaginative methods and highly challenging activities, which help maintain a rigorous pace and very good learning. Relevant and practical lesson activities engage pupils' interest and teachers use resources such as interactive whiteboards effectively to help pupils understand easily. Well-qualified teaching assistants make an important contribution to supporting group and individual learning. An outstanding feature of lessons is the way pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with each other and reflect on how well they are progressing towards their individual targets. Marking is often of a high quality, although some teachers do not always give pupils advice on how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The innovative and creative curriculum inspires pupils. There is a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, with planning adapted especially well to address the weaker aspects of pupils' learning. For example, there is a wealth of opportunities to support progress in writing, including drama activities. However, some developments to support writing are too recent to have had a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Assessment and tracking information is used well to set up special programmes for pupils who need extra support. Enrichment activities are good, and include a range of visits, visitors and after school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Rigorous systems for safeguarding pupils fully meet government guidelines. The personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' development well. Over the past year, a comprehensive range of procedures have been put in place to monitor and track progress. These have been very successful in setting pupils challenging improvement targets in reading, writing and mathematics. They are currently being refined to include other subjects such as science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has very successfully led the school through a period of rapid change and development, ensuring that staff share his vision and aspirations for the school. Teamwork amongst staff and governors is very good and there is a determination to build on and extend recent improvement. The school is very modest about how well it is doing, largely because it recognises that it can do even better, and has effective strategies to help it improve further.

Recent staff changes include several new members of the senior leadership team and new subject leaders. They have made a very good start, although the full effect of the improvements they have made to pupils' progress is not yet apparent. Governors are very well led and help maintain excellent links with the army base and service families. They use their skills exceptionally well to support the school. For example, one governor has instituted peer appraisal and support to ensure the best teaching practice is as widely shared as possible. Very good attention has been given to allocating financial resources for the employment of skilled teaching assistants. Staff and governors have successfully built a happy community where pupils' different cultures and beliefs are respected.

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?	2
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	3
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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkhill Primary School, Salisbury, SP4 8QB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed the time we spent with you. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their break time to speak with us. We think your school is good and are delighted that you and your parents agree.

Here are some of the things we found out that were good about the school:

- Adults take excellent care of you because they have an especially good understanding of how to support children who come from service families.
- You have excellent attitudes to work and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You get on well together and help each other; you are mature and thoughtful young people.
- You make good progress, so that most of you reach average standards by the end of Year 6; your progress in reading is very good.
- Your teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to do; you are well taught and we agree with you that lessons are fun.
- Teachers give you lots of good advice on how to improve; the targets they set you encourage you to do your best.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have helped your school to improve over the last 18 months and they continue to do so. Here are some of the things we would like to see improved:
- Although you have made good progress in writing over the past year, we think you can do even better; you can help by following your teachers' advice and trying your best.
- Although teaching is good, we agree with your teachers that it could be even better.

Thank you again for all your help, and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

D Wilkinson

Lead Inspector