

# Lyons Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131207
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	328565
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Speakman

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	490
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Thorndyke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 July 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Deerleap Way Braintree Essex CM7 9FH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01376 552393
<b>Fax number</b>	01376 552396

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 July 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Lyons Hall is a much larger than average school. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage at the beginning of their Reception Year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with a statement of special educational needs, is similar to that found nationally. Most of these needs relate to specific learning difficulties, or pupils' speech and communication. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, but a significant number come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as a second language. The school is currently in the process of reducing the number on roll.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Lyons Hall is an outstanding school, which has experienced continuous rapid growth and improvement over recent years. 'An excellent school and we are lucky to have it in our area' and 'Since the headteacher joined, the school has gone from strength to strength every year' sum up the overwhelming support of parents who responded to the parent questionnaires. There is an established pattern of well above average standards by the end of Year 6, now sustained over time. The headteacher, working in very successful partnership with the deputy headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and governors have developed exceptionally rigorous and effective checking procedures to monitor performance. Nothing less than personal best is acceptable. This attitude has been adopted by all who work and learn in the school, adults and pupils alike. All strive hard to achieve their very best and have grown to set demanding challenges for their own individual performance. Working in this culture of high expectation means that the quality of education provided is outstanding. Pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who find learning easy and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve exceptionally well due to the outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' achievement but an examination of pupil's exercise books shows some inconsistency in how staff promote handwriting and presentation of work.

As well as making excellent progress in their academic studies, pupils develop into mature and well-balanced young people. Their personal development is outstanding. Pupils are given lots of responsibility. For example, they are helped and encouraged to initially find solutions to any difficulties for themselves. The school has excellent procedures in place to help pupils think things through and reflect on their experiences in a mature and positive manner. Pupils do this very well. The school code of conduct, 'be kind, be safe be responsible' guides their approach to learning and to each other. As a result, they are able to reflect on issues in a mature way that adds to their confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils know a great deal about their own preferred learning styles. Groups are regularly consulted, being given the opportunity to evaluate lessons from the pupils' perspective. Sensible and thoughtful answers to teachers' questions provide a valuable insight into the effectiveness of lessons and how learning can be improved. Pupils' views make a significant contribution to the drive to constantly develop teaching and learning styles. They also help the way pupils are encouraged to understand about and take responsibility for their own learning. They speak confidently about their learning and the progress they are making.

There is a very strong sense of teamwork, where all strive to ensure the very best for all pupils. Outstanding leadership and management has ensured that teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff all have the skills they need to perform to a high level of competence. The rate of past improvement has been considerable and there are highly effective processes to monitor and evaluate school performance. Together with the determination to accept only the best, this means the school has an excellent capacity to make even further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children settle happily into the Reception classes. Staff know a great deal about the children before they start school because there are good arrangements for parents and children to visit

beforehand and staff visit local nurseries and playgroups. Children soon become confident with classroom routines. There is a secure and challenging environment where children are encouraged to make choices, develop self-confidence and independence. Children are looked after with the utmost care and attention. Teaching is outstanding. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught very well. Children are expertly taught letter sounds and names and other skills to develop early writing and reading are also taught very effectively. Adults make careful observations of what children can do and then plan work that is matched to their interests and learning needs. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. The extremely stimulating outdoor learning environment is used to great advantage, with children given excellent opportunities to explore and discover. Meaningful links between areas of learning are consistently planned to enable children to practise their skills when working outdoors. Transition arrangements from Reception to Year 1 are good and this helps to ensure children continue to learn successfully. The Foundation Stage team leader manages staff exceptionally well and all adults work very effectively as a team. Parents are welcomed warmly into school and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Promote the development of pupils' handwriting, with uniform consistency in order to:
- Progressively develop a cursive style of handwriting as pupils move through the school.
- Ensure that pupils present their work neatly at all stages and in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Children start school with skills that are below the expected level for their age, particularly in communication and calculation. Reception children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning and this year, most will exceed expectations for their age by the end of the Reception Year. This excellent progress continues through both Key Stages 1 and 2 and standards are steadily rising. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and in mathematics is now just above average, representing very good progress for this cohort. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is rising at a pace much greater than seen in many schools. In 2005, test results were below average in all subjects. Since then, the improved quality of education has resulted in well above average results being sustained over the last two years. Targets for 2010 are even more challenging. Inspection evidence indicates that the current Year 5 will achieve, if not exceed their targets, confirming the sustained high standards. Not only are standards in English, mathematics and science well above average, but high standards are evident in a whole range of other subjects, including information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, creative subjects (music and art) and physical education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are very proud of their school and they enjoy their time there. Attendance is above average. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and secure and know who to approach if they have a concern. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. There are many opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life. School council meetings, an 'Eco' committee and the possibility of becoming librarians or reading monitors for the younger children help pupils make a strong contribution to school life. Additionally, they are able to become monitors in class and older pupils become 'Lyon

Leaders'. Here, they look after the younger ones at play time, organising games and activities when appropriate. Pupils know how to stay healthy. They eat healthily and enjoy a wide range of sports and outdoor activities such as gardening and golf. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of what it is like to live in other cultures. They take part in several fund raising activities and a number of charitable events to support pupils from overseas. Pupils show great pride in their own and others' achievements. There are regular assemblies where pupils support and praise each other, effectively raising everyone's self-esteem. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative and contribute to school life in a way that prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives and school careers.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are excellent because teachers know their pupils very well and plan exciting lessons that challenge and motivate their classes. Pupils experience very skilled, enthusiastic teaching, which, because of its consistency, contributes significantly to high achievement. Relationships are very good and this promotes enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are given the skills to evaluate and improve their work. Investigations, first-hand practical and creative experiences, group work and the opportunity to share and discuss ideas are all given consistent emphasis. Classrooms are all well organised for learning. Teachers work hard to create bright, colourful environments with attractive displays that include useful learning prompts. Books are marked carefully and often show pupils what they need to do to reach the next steps in learning. However, a minority of teachers are less effective in helping pupils understand how they should improve their handwriting and the presentation of their work. Those who need extra help with their learning are very well supported. The work of teaching assistants is particularly well targeted. They are very well briefed and extremely effective in both challenging and supporting pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are firmly embedded across all subject areas and used innovatively to interest and stimulate pupil's learning. The school ensures that pupils identified as needing extra support, or further challenges, are catered for exceptionally well through a wide range of support strategies. The school provides a very rich curriculum by offering a breadth of learning opportunities that takes it well beyond National Curriculum requirements. There are excellent arrangements to develop pupils' personal, creative and physical skills through the wide range of opportunities for them to engage in sporting activities and musical performance. European languages are taught from a very early age and pupils can learn French from the Early Years with Spanish taught in Year 2 and in an after school club. The curriculum is planned to make secure and meaningful links between subjects, which adds relevance, interest and enjoyment to learning. Mini enterprise weeks are a favourite activity and help children to develop skills and knowledge which help develop their future economic well being. An exciting and extensive range of visits and visitors and highly effective links with other schools add greatly to learning opportunities. The wide range of excellent enrichment activities and after school clubs is well attended and pupils speak positively about these.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The staff display a high level of commitment to the care and support of all pupils; this is also true in the breakfast club. This makes a significant contribution to their excellent academic achievement and personal development. Each pupil's progress across all subjects is very carefully tracked. Using this information, staff quickly identify pupils in need of support and those who would benefit from having their work extended or learning accelerated. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they should be aiming for. Support for pupils with specific needs, whether these are emotional, behavioural or any other difficulties in learning is outstanding. This includes providing for those with particular gifts or talents. Arrangements for the safeguarding of children and staff are firmly in place and regularly monitored to ensure that the school environment is safe and secure. The school works closely with parents and carers. The strong links with the local secondary school ensure that transition from primary to secondary is well managed and pupils are confident and well prepared.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are exceptional leaders. They have successfully built a team of highly skilled teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff who all ensure effective learning as a principal focus. They all work very well together to constantly evaluate and improve school performance. Leadership roles are clearly defined and all staff contribute to putting into practice the shared vision of the school's direction and priorities. The facilities manager and administrative staff oversee the day to day routines of the school in a highly competent manner. As a result, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are free to focus their attention on maintaining the highest possible quality of education. Governors play a very important role in leadership and management. Under the strong and highly focused guidance of the chair, they monitor key areas of school development, including priorities in the school improvement plan. They support the school very well, whilst still holding staff to account for their performance.

The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. The senior leadership team and governors have fully audited where the school stands in relation to the local, national and global communities. The school has established a strong working partnership with parents, who have very high opinions of what the school is doing for their children. There are excellent links with the local community, using these to develop pupils' skills to prepare them for their future economic well-being. Through the links with Africa, pupils are aware of their role in the wider world and the different lifestyles of others.

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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?	1
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	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lyons Hall School, Braintree, CM7 9FH

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. We were very impressed by the level of maturity in the way you all conduct yourselves. You are obviously very proud of what you do in school. We really appreciated the large number of you who came up to talk and to share your work with us. We thoroughly enjoyed listening to what you had to say. You are all excellent ambassadors for Lyons Hall and the way you go about your work and play helped us decide just how outstanding your school is.

You go to an excellent school and you spoke highly of your time here. All staff work very well together to provide you with a high quality education. You make excellent progress in lessons, and reach high standards in a very wide range of subjects.

You play a great part in the school's success story. This is because you behave very well and try very hard to do your best. We liked the way you respond in lessons, with lots of interest and enthusiasm. We were impressed by the sensible way in which you make friends, care about each other and have really good manners. This all goes to help others feel safe. It is clear to visitors just how much you love your school.

Although your school is outstanding, there is always room for improvement. We have asked the staff and governors to help you develop your handwriting better and to make sure that all your work is presented to a high standard.

We wish you all the best in the future and we are confident that with your help and support, your school will go from strength to strength.

Yours faithfully

David Speakman

Lead inspector