

Lucas Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100695
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	335583
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Robert Lovett

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	307
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Lymbery
Headteacher	Sonia Rutherford
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
School address	Thornville Street London SE8 4QB
Telephone number	020 86924660
Fax number	020 8305 8619
Email address	sonia.rutherford@hotmail.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 teachers in 11 lessons. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, newly appointed executive headteacher, a representative of the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school council. Inspectors also met with staff to discuss pupils' progress, the Early Years Foundation Stage, the curriculum and support for individual pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school improvement plans, the minutes of governors' meetings, school and local authority monitoring information, data on pupils' progress and a range of policies and procedures, including information about how the school keeps pupils safe. Inspectors also looked at staff and pupil questionnaires and 148 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. While all were looked at, only 102 of these arrived in time to be included in the analysis.

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

- action taken to reverse the recent fall in standards
- the impact of strategies to enable new pupils to settle quickly and ensure their learning and other needs are met effectively
- achievement among pupils of Black African heritage and the effectiveness of measures taken to support their learning
- actions to reverse the recent fall in attendance
- the effectiveness of interim management arrangements in sustaining school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. There are three classes in Key Stage 1 and six mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and two Reception classes. There have been significant recent staffing changes, including in the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher of a successful local primary school has recently been appointed as executive headteacher, with the acting headteacher becoming associate headteacher. There are two recently appointed deputy headteachers.

The school population is representative of the rich cultural heritage of the area. Just over 60% of pupils are from Black African or Black Caribbean heritage and about 11% are White British. A high proportion of pupils are believed to speak a first language other than English and of these many are in the early stages of learning English. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school holds the Activemark and meets the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS).

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

After a turbulent recent period, when the school saw a number of changes in leadership and lost its focus on raising standards, it is back on course. The remarkable rapidity of the turnaround is largely due to the vision and determination of the acting headteacher, who has secured significant improvement in a relatively short space of time. In doing this she has been well supported by the local authority and by other colleagues. Her drive and enthusiasm have ensured the support and commitment of pupils, parents and staff. All staff say they are proud of their school and they feel involved in what it is trying to achieve. As a result of this shared vision and commitment, pupils' good long-term progress has been maintained. However, changes in personnel have had an impact on the quality of teaching, which is improving and satisfactory overall. Much teaching is good, but no outstanding teaching was observed and too many lessons move at a slow pace. Also, teachers' marking does not consistently show pupils how to improve. The school is rightly committed to ensuring that all teaching is good or outstanding.

Children settle quickly into the nursery and there are strong relationships with parents and carers. Because the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and provision is good, children make rapid gains. However, the thorough assessments made of children's development do not consistently translate into detailed planning for learning. Children enjoy playing and learning outdoors, but staff do not make full use of outside areas to promote learning.

The school knows itself well. Self-evaluation is a joint enterprise among staff and governors and this has resulted in a clear picture of how well the school is doing and how to improve further. As a result there has been a good focus on raising standards. Monitoring of learning and teaching is robust and accurate. A particular strength has been meetings between staff to see how well individual pupils are doing and to address underachievement. These meetings have been highly successful in ensuring that the needs of individual pupils are well met, but they have not yet had sufficient impact on raising expectations for all pupils in all classes.

The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and planning for improvement is generally good. However, these plans are not always sufficiently rigorous in linking actions to the expected outcome so that the school knows which actions have had most impact and the governing body is able to hold it properly to account. Nonetheless, as a result of its shared vision for school improvement, ambition and accurate self-evaluation processes, the school is well placed to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve the quality of learning by ensuring that all teaching is at least good by:
 - ensuring that all groups of pupils benefit from challenging activities in all lessons and classes
 - ensuring the pace of learning is always brisk and that time is used effectively
 - ensuring marking consistently tells pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information to inform planning and maximise children’s progress
 - improving outdoor provision so that more learning happens out of doors.
- Improve governors’ strategic management of the school through making improvement planning more specific in linking actions to measurable outcomes, particularly to raising standards.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The quality of learning observed in lessons varied in line with the quality of teaching, but pupils’ longer-term progress has been good despite the fall last year. In the best lessons, work is carefully matched to pupils’ different abilities and they approach learning with enthusiasm and commitment. In a good English lesson pupils discussed their work with great maturity and provided each other with useful advice on how to improve their writing. When teaching lacks pace and urgency, pupils’ achievement slows, but even in such cases all groups of pupils usually make steady progress because activities are tailored to their individual needs.

Standards seen in lessons and in pupils’ books in the current Year 6 were broadly average, but this still represents good achievement for this group of pupils. Progress is rising rapidly after a significant fall last year, having previously been good for many years. The school’s rigorous tracking data indicate that most pupils are now making good progress again, with some significant groups making outstanding progress. For example, support for pupils who speak a home language other than English is very effective because work is well matched to their learning needs. Pupils from a Black African heritage are now making rapid progress in their learning following the introduction of a targeted programme of support. Those pupils of broadly average ability are making good progress, following their identification as an underachieving group and the introduction of strategies to support them.

Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and systems for ensuring the security of the site are good. While behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, pupils are eager to see it improve further. Part of the reason for good behaviour at break times is the range of activities and equipment available, some purchased by the school council following fundraising. The school council is proud of the contribution it has made to

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enriching school life through its suggestion for an increase in the number and range of lunchtime clubs, and is pleased with the school’s positive response. Pupils have an appropriate awareness of a healthy diet and lifestyle. They say they enjoy the range of healthy lunches but still enjoy chips on Fridays.

Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social development is a particular strength. The school fosters a sense of personal responsibility among pupils so that members of the school community have a shared sense of belonging. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through the many formal and informal ways they help and support one another. The school recognises that links to the wider and international community are less well developed. Following a recent fall in attendance the school has taken rigorous and effective action to reduce absences. It has been particularly effective in dramatically reducing the number of pupils who are persistent absentees. While the development of workplace skills is satisfactory overall, there are strengths in pupils’ ability to work collaboratively and in their good relationships.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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All teaching seen was at least satisfactory and about half was good. The best teaching is characterised by a brisk pace of learning, teachers’ good subject knowledge and high expectations of achievement and behaviour. In a good mathematics lesson where pupils were improving their addition and subtraction skills, pupils worked very well as part of a group, learning was well matched to pupils’ abilities and there was effective support from teaching assistants. Effective questioning ensures all pupils are kept active and engaged and is used well to assess their learning.

In satisfactory lessons a common feature is less effective use of time, so that the pace of learning slows and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect on and discuss their work. There are insufficient opportunities to practise and improve their speaking and listening skills. The school’s marking policy is comprehensive and eminently practical. Where it is applied well, marking is good. However, it is sometimes too focused on encouragement at the expense of telling pupils how well they are doing and how to improve further. Most of the older pupils know how well they are doing and what their targets for improvement are. They say their targets are regularly monitored and changed when achieved.

The curriculum undergoes regular review and adjustment to ensure its improving relevance to the needs of pupils. Enhanced provision to improve the reading and writing skills of underachieving groups of pupils has been very effective. French is taught, and enjoyed by most pupils, in Years 1 to 6. Recent improvements in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) ensure good access to computers in every classroom in addition to mobile laptops. The small ICT suite for pupils in Key Stage 1 is effective in developing their basic computer skills. The school recognises that the curriculum for geography and history is underdeveloped. There is good cultural and creative enrichment through a range of visits connected to curricular themes and links such as those with the London Schools Ballet. There is a good range of clubs at lunchtime and before and after school, including cricket (when it’s dry!), football, recorders and music technology.

The school is increasingly engaging parents and carers in their children’s education, and has improved its arrangements for keeping parents informed about how well their children are doing through the introduction of termly progress reports. Good systems are in place for tracking pupils’ progress and ensuring extra support for those who need it. Pupils with particular learning, emotional and physical needs are well supported through good targeted interventions. Pupils benefit from very good pastoral care. The inclusion manager has good systems in place for identifying the needs of individual pupils and ensuring these are met. A case study on a pupil with particular learning needs demonstrated an exceptional level of care and support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has ensured that the school has had a clear and unrelenting focus on the quality of teaching, pupils' learning and its impact on achievement. The 'Back on Track' document, which was used to communicate her vision for the school, has galvanised the whole school community and helped embed key skills such as self-evaluation and target setting. As a result there is a strong, shared ambition for the school and its pupils. The drive for school improvement has been effectively supported by the local authority, through the use of advisors and consultants, and experienced colleagues from neighbouring schools. During the previous academic year the governors did not monitor pupils' achievement or the success of intervention strategies intended to raise standards with sufficient rigour. The Chair of the Governing Body knows the school very well and personifies governors' renewed commitment to hold the school to account. The school development plan does not link actions sufficiently well to measurable outcomes, particularly those relating to standards, and this is hindering their work.

Safeguarding procedures are exceptionally rigorous. All required checks on those who work with pupils are carried out and recorded diligently. Training for the person responsible for safeguarding is up to date and there has been recent whole-staff training in child protection. Policies and procedures for safeguarding children are clear, regularly reviewed and familiar to staff. The school's effective financial management systems are attested to through meeting the FMSiS.

The school has a strong, shared sense of community and pride. It actively promotes equality and tackles discrimination. As a result, pupils are happy and enjoy learning. As one said, 'This is a real multicultural school, we don't just talk about it.' Its recent focus on raising the achievement of all groups of pupils has resulted in good progress for all groups of pupils. The school itself is a very cohesive and supportive community, and is developing links with schools in other parts of the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery Year at levels which are well below those expected, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. During their time in the Nursery and Reception classes they make good progress in learning and in their personal development. Children from different cultures and backgrounds play and work together well and show awareness of one another’s individual needs and safety. There are effective partnerships with parents as a result of initiatives such as ‘Dads into School’ and ‘Playing with Words’. While provision is generally good, the use of the outside area does not promote outdoor learning sufficiently well.

The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has improved provision significantly so that the progress children make has improved year on year since 2007. There is good teamwork across the Early Years Foundation Stage. While detailed records of children’s progress are kept, these assessments are not always used effectively to inform planning so that teaching matches the full range of children’s learning needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally well satisfied with what the school provides. Almost all parents and carers say their children enjoy school. A very large majority say that it is led and managed well, their children are kept safe and that they are happy overall. A few parents and carers would welcome more help in supporting their child’s learning. The school is aware of this need and has introduced more detailed and frequent progress reports for pupils and is seeking to strengthen the relationship between school and home. A few parents also expressed concern about how effectively the school meets the individual needs of pupils. While not being able to investigate specific individual cases,

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inspectors judge that support for individual learning needs is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lucas Vale Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 307 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	63	35	34	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	56	55	41	40	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	40	53	52	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	43	52	51	2	2	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	48	47	36	35	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	32	54	53	7	7	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	43	49	48	4	4	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	23	58	57	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	26	56	55	8	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	36	50	49	4	4	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	27	59	58	5	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	31	30	59	58	3	3	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	47	42	41	4	4	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lucas Vale Primary School, London, SE8 4QB

Thank you for making me and my colleagues feel so welcome when we visited your school recently, and a special 'thank you' to the school council who met with me and to those pupils we spoke to on the playground and in the dining hall. The things you told us about the school were very helpful in reaching our judgements. We were pleased to read in the questionnaire many of you completed that you feel you learn a lot in lessons. We think you attend a good school which has improved a lot since September. We also think the school is in a good position to improve further. Here are the things which most impressed us.

- Yours is a happy and hardworking school. You are very polite and welcoming, both to visitors and to children who join the school.
- The acting headteacher is doing a really good job. She is very well supported in raising standards by the other adults who work in the school and through help and advice from the local authority and other schools.
- Your behaviour is good on the playground and around the school.
- Children settle into the Nursery quickly and make good progress.
- Those of you who join the school during the year are made to feel welcome and valued. Those of you who have particular learning needs are also very well supported.
- Arrangements for keeping you safe and secure are exceptionally good. You and your headteacher told us about the cyber-safety week.

We believe the school can be even better. We have asked it to do three main things.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers can improve their planning and particularly help children to make better use of the outside areas.
- You make good progress but standards could be higher, and we would like all teaching to be as good as the best we saw. You can help by always attending regularly and telling your teachers if your work is too hard or too easy.
- The school's leaders need to be clearer about how the things they plan to do will raise standards, so they can make sure that their plans really work.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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