

Lapal Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103797
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336159
Inspection dates	22 - 23 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Kerr

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	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Figures
Headteacher	Doug Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	23/04/2007
School address	Priory Road Halesowen B62 0BZ
Telephone number	01384828200
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, documents and the parent questionnaires, many of which had comments.

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

- the pupils' progress from year to year and term to term
- provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well governors and senior managers are tackling key issues
- parents' views of the school, especially about the information they receive.

Information about the school

Lapal Primary School is larger than most similar schools. It has traditionally catered largely for pupils living in the immediate vicinity but currently about 40% of pupils come from further afield. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds, with about 12% from a number of different ethnic minority groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and those eligible for free school meals, are below average. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is broadly similar to that found nationally. A pre-school, nursery and Before and After School facilities on site are run as lettings to private providers. These are inspected separately. The school has achieved a Healthy School and Eco-school (Bronze) awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a sound education for its pupils and fosters good personal development. Attendance is good and the pupils' feel safe and well-cared for. Their willingness to work in lessons contributes strongly to their learning. Measures were taken to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, but monitoring of their impact was not effective enough. However, persisting weaknesses in outcomes for pupils are now being successfully tackled by a newly invigorated leadership team. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall through Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. However, progress is much better in some year groups and subjects than in others. This means that eventual outcomes for pupils depend too much on which classes and sets they have been in over the years. Strengths and weaknesses in teaching that affect the pupils' learning have now been identified and robust measures are being taken to remedy them. This has already had an impact in the improved writing results in 2009, which brought standards in English to above the national average. However, more able pupils are still being given tasks well within their capabilities in some lessons. As one pupil commented: 'This is the best school but I want harder work.' Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains satisfactory and children are making better progress overall this term than in the previous one, and good progress in their personal development. The school has done a lot to improve the communication with parents, particularly about their children's progress, but a substantial minority still think more should be done.

The governing body has successfully steered the school through a series of financial and staffing difficulties in recent years. However, governors have not fulfilled all their duties as fully as they should, including the statutory responsibility to plan for community cohesion. They have not asked challenging questions of the school, partly because they lacked the information on pupils' outcomes to enable them to do so. However, the recent provision of good quality data on pupils' progress has stimulated governors to review the way they operate, and good plans are now in place to more effectively hold the school to account. This purposeful relationship between governors and the staff gives the school a satisfactory capacity to continue and extend the improvements already seen over the last term.

A proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, throughout the school by:
 - setting regular, measurable targets for each pupils' progress;
 - taking robust action to ensure that any under-achievement is tackled swiftly;
 - monitoring the involvement of ethnic minority pupils in school activities, together with their relative progress, to ensure full equality of opportunity.

- Further improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that the current good progress in personal development extends to all the areas of learning;
 - improving the toilet and outdoor play facilities.

- Improve the contribution of the governing body to the work of the school by:
 - fulfilling statutory obligations with regard to community cohesion;
 - formalising procedures for adopting and reviewing policies;
 - regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of action plans in raising pupils' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Standards are broadly average overall at the end of Year 6 but progress remains too patchy. The pupils respond well when challenged. They enjoy tackling difficult problems in mathematics and make great efforts to excel in their written work when motivated by good teaching. For example:

- a whole class of Year 6 pupils made great strides in their understanding of algebra when the teacher saw that they could all tackle the extra challenge he had prepared for the most able;
- more able Year 6 pupils reflected high levels of accomplishment in the use of similes and metaphors in their written work and discussions.

However, pupils make considerably less progress in some year groups than in others. This unevenness in progress has affected the pupils' eventual outcomes at Year 6 because their final attainment has relied too much on the efforts put in to raise it during their final two years. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, with strengths in reading and mathematics, but writing remains a weaker area. Pupil's progress in the investigative aspects of science is now satisfactory. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds progress at the same rate as others. Pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities make sound progress overall relative to their starting points and the nature of their needs.

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Participation in sports activities is good and pupils tend to choose healthy options for school dinners. Their good behaviour and enthusiasm for work helps them to make the most of the learning opportunities they are offered. As one pupil wrote: 'I think school is cool, brilliant and fun!' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains good because of their maturity and moral sense, although more could be done to encourage reflection. The school council has helped to give the pupils a good awareness of how they can affect decisions about their lives and stimulated an interest in how democracy works.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, some good and outstanding lessons were seen in English in Year 2 and mathematics in Year 6. Pupils were inspired to maximum effort and made rapid progress because of :

- a stimulating classroom environment;
- activities based on accurate assessments that challenge pupils of all abilities;
- good variety in teaching methods including 'talking partners' and individual writing boards so that the pupils are actively engaged a lot of the time and not just listening;
- teachers asking probing questions, and sometimes changing the lesson in response to pupils' answers

The new leadership team recognises the need to spread this good practice and is planning to do so. Leaders agree that able pupils should be challenged more and that active learning should be a much stronger feature of lessons.

The introduction of topics into the curriculum has excited and motivated the pupils,

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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but their development of skills in each subject is not monitored closely enough. For example, in an art lesson linking portrait painting to a history topic on Tudors, all pupils were given the same activity regardless of their observational drawing skills. Given pupils' patchy achievement in the core subjects, this weakness in planning for skills in topic lessons led the team to disagree with the school's evaluation of good for the curriculum. Computer technology is used well to help pupils learn, both in teachers' presentations and in pupils' work. For example, pupils confidently use the Internet to carry out research independently. A variety of activities, including music and sport is provided within and beyond lessons. The pupils are well looked after, for example when feeling ill, and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils finding work difficult. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and succeed, but, this aspect of provision is not specifically monitored.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management have been transformed over the last six months. A new sense of determination to tackle under-achievement pervades the school. The deputy head has provided an excellent lead in data analysis to provide a clear picture of where in the school pupils do best and where they under-perform. The leadership team has arrived at an accurate view of what is needed to remedy weaknesses and a detailed action plan is in place. The plan is a sound one, but it lacks regular measurable targets for each class or details of actions to be taken in the event of any groups falling behind. The monitoring of teaching is better than it was but needs still more emphasis on how well different groups of pupils are learning in lessons. The governors work hard to support the school, but their efforts have not been sufficiently focused on challenging the school to improve its performance. The adoption and review of policies is not systematic enough and this has led to some gaps in provision. For example, there is no clear policy or plan to promote community cohesion, which is a statutory requirement. The school has developed some useful links with other institutions locally, but does not evaluate them in terms of their contribution towards community cohesion aims. Safeguarding procedures are securely embedded in policy and practice, but routine health and safety procedures are not implemented rigorously enough. Governors visit the school regularly but their work has lacked clarity of purpose. However, they are now determined to monitor the school's performance more closely using the good quality information provided by the deputy head. For example, governors have suggested

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being attached to a particular year group; this would fit neatly into the school's plan to ensure even progress from year to year.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are similar to those typically found. They make adequate progress to reach broadly expected standards by the end of Reception. The children have settled very quickly this term and are making rapid gains in their personal development. They enjoy the varied activities on offer, both indoors and outdoors. They exercise a good degree of independence in their choices of activities, and they behave well. There is now a good system for assigning an adult to oversee each individual child's progress and activities are relevant to the children's stage of development. The staff work effectively as a team to continue improving the quality of the children's learning. Better use is being made of assessments to track the children's progress, but this is not yet fully effective across all aspects of the children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

A good number of parents commented on the school. The things parents appreciated included:

- better communication between the school and parents;
- good support for children on induction into Reception and on transfer to the main school and to secondary school;
- good provision for the younger children and good support for pupils with special educational needs.

The main areas that concerned parents were:

- poor communication generally;
- a lack of information about what was happening to their child in school;
- the way poor behaviour in the playground was dealt with.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lapal 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 302 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	54	40	40	1	1	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	53	53	42	42	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	22	54	54	16	16	4	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	29	57	57	7	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	38	49	49	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	30	46	46	13	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	36	54	54	6	6	0	0
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)	20	20	55	55	10	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	21	61	61	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	20	42	42	14	14	8	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	21	46	46	17	17	6	6
The school is led and managed effectively	31	31	40	40	17	17	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	41	40	40	7	7	1	1

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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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

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>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 pupils' 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.



23RD September 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Lapal Primary School, Priory Road, Halesowen, B62 0BZ

Mrs McTiffin, Mr Bartleman, Mrs Millett and I enjoyed our time in your school. We found you lively and interesting to talk to. You are putting a lot of effort into your work and doing well in some things. We were particularly pleased with how many of you take part in sports and other healthy activities. We were also impressed with how well some of you play musical instruments. You do your school and families proud. We were pleased to see that you are enjoying the new topic lessons which we also think are a good idea. Some of you could do even harder work some of the time and become even more successful. So, we have asked your teachers to do a few things to make the school even better for you. This is the list of the things we have asked them to do:

- keep a closer watch on how well you all do each term and make sure that your work is hard enough;
- help the children in the reception class do as well as they possibly can in all their activities;
- get the governors to help them keep an eye on your work;

We hope you continue to enjoy school and wish you well for the future.

Peter Kerr
Lead inspector.

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