

# Laburnum Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109477
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337299
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	148
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev. Janet Mackenzie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janice Pibworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector at the school for two days and another for half a day. Inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at samples of pupils' work, analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, the school improvement plan, the school profile and the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 42 parents and carers.

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

- how pupils of all abilities are helped to make progress throughout the school, particularly in writing
- pupils' appreciation and understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to move their work on.
- how the actions taken by school leaders and governors are driving improvements in the school.

## Information about the school

In this small school, almost all pupils are of White British heritage, including around 5% who are from Traveller backgrounds. There are more boys than girls. A high proportion of pupils join and leave the school partway through their primary education. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Of these, most are identified as having moderate learning difficulties but there are also several pupils with severe learning difficulties. Laburnum Lower has a Healthy Schools award and Activemark.

**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

Laburnum Lower School lives up to its motto, 'learning, living and smiling'. Its sustained success in all three of these aims, and leaders' accurate self-evaluation, show the school's good capacity for continued improvement. In respect of learning, the average standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 4 represent good progress in relation to their starting points. This is achieved through generally good teaching and, in particular, support for the pupils with both moderate and severe special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those pupils who join Laburnum partway through their primary education are helped to make good progress during their time at the school. A typical view was expressed by a parent whose son joined the school earlier this year, 'The school has ensured that the transition was as easy as possible. We are very happy with the way the staff helped our son to settle in.' Even those parents who voice some criticisms of the school because they consider leaders are unresponsive to suggestions, readily praise the high expectations of behaviour and most say their children are learning well.

A key feature of the school is the arrangements that the headteacher and leadership team have put in place to set targets for each pupil and regularly evaluate their learning. In Years 1 to 4, a weekly target-setting meeting checks through progress with a third of the class, so that every child's progress is looked at in detail every three weeks and pupils are themselves involved in assessing their own work and how they can make it better. Where a child is identified as falling behind, action is taken to support them. A parent praised the way 'my child has five one-to-one lessons a week which has seen him make a lot of progress'. Although pupils all have targets that set out for them the next steps in their learning, they do not all know what they are and do not routinely refer to them in their work. This is because these are mainly displayed on classroom walls rather than on their desks or in the front of their books, and therefore less accessible

The push, over the past year, on reading has yielded positive results, with a rise in reading standards and, as parents confirm, 'a spurt of enthusiasm for reading' from boys, including some who were previously reluctant readers. Nevertheless, some parents would like to see reading books changed more frequently. There are complaints too from several parents about a lack of rigour over spelling. Pupils are not always encouraged to take sufficient care over their spelling and punctuation and mistakes are not always corrected when teachers mark work. Throughout the school, even in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' writing lags behind their reading and numeracy. In part, this is because they are not given enough opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills. This is especially the case on those occasions when teachers give pupils worksheets and templates to complete. Although these often provide a helpful framework for less able pupils, they do not provide sufficient challenge for the most

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able.

Pupils' good personal development means that they are well prepared for living in the wider world. Behaviour is good throughout the school and the pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example as school councillors. Reception children comment on how the older boys and girls befriend and look out for them in the playground. Pupils also contribute to the wider community, including through their support of charities which they choose themselves. Pupils have a very clear appreciation of the need for a healthy diet and the high participation rate in the various extra-curricular sporting activities on offer show how well they take on board the need for regular exercise.

'I don't know what it is', explained one Year 4 boy, 'But you always have a smile on your face at Laburnum.' A child in Year 3 offered the suggestion that it was because 'teachers make learning fun'. Certainly, the links made between different subjects help to bring the curriculum to life and contribute strongly to pupils' enjoyment. This was evident, for example, in the enthusiasm of Year 1 pupils who, in design technology, drew on their work looking at different dwellings in geography to design houses of 'straw', wood and bricks. This followed their literacy focus on the story of The Three Little Pigs. The many smiling faces from the Nursery to Year 4 show that Laburnum is a happy school.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards throughout the school in writing by the end of the summer term 2010 by
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop and apply their literacy skills through writing across all subjects
  - giving children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more opportunities to practise their emerging writing skills by making their own labels for displays and activities in the Reception and Nursery classes and their outdoor areas
  - reducing the dependence on worksheets and templates for recording answers, especially for more able pupils
  - routinely expecting pupils to check their spellings and correct them when necessary
  - making sure that pupils are all aware of and make use of their targets.
- By the end of the spring term 2010, governors should review the school's procedures for dealing with parents' suggestions and complaints to better ensure that parents feel the school is accessible when they have concerns.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

The work in pupils' books and many of the lessons seen during the inspection show boys and girls of different abilities making good progress. That is evident too in the assessments made shortly before pupils leave at the end of Year 4, where the average standards attained represent good progress in relation to pupils' often low starting

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points, both when joining the Early Years Foundation Stage and among many of those who join Laburnum later in their schooling. The pupils who need extra help with their learning make especially good progress because they benefit from carefully targeted support. Support is also tailored well to boosting the performance of pupils who are at risk of falling behind.

Pupils quickly learn and mostly follow the orderly routines that staff establish. As a result, pupils generally listen well to their teachers and to each other, and this contributes to the good progress that they make. Their enthusiasm for school is reflected in the sustained improvement in attendance, which is average despite the relatively high level of pupil mobility.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage their classes well and establish orderly routines that are consistent across the school. These are understood and appreciated by pupils and, as a result, pupils settle to work quickly and without fuss. The teachers know their pupils well and the good relationships in each class help to motivate pupils to work hard and succeed.

<sup>1</sup> 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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When asked if there was anything they would want to change in the school, several pupils were quick to reply, 'Not the teachers!' Questioning is used well by teachers to check on pupils' understanding and to move their learning on. They make imaginative links between subjects so that, for example, pupils in Year 2, learning in history about the Great Fire of London, have set up their own 'Pudding Lane Bakery', where they are learning, albeit in a more modern setting, about different types of bread. The lively curriculum is a key factor in pupils' evident enjoyment of school, but an overdependence on worksheets dulls some activities. Where pupils of widely different capabilities are given the same worksheets or templates on which to record their work, this limits opportunities for pupils, and especially the more able, to practise, apply and extend their writing skills.

Marking gives pupils encouragement as well as helpful guidance on how to improve their work, although teachers are not always rigorous enough in insisting on accurate spelling. Not all pupils know and refer to the targets that are on the wall in most classes, but an outstanding feature of assessment in this school is the way each pupil is involved in regularly evaluating their own work against criteria for National Curriculum levels to identify how to make it better.

Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare draw well on the strong partnership arrangements with outside agencies, particularly in supporting the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school other than at the usual time. Sustained vigilance has kept down absence rates. As a result, the attendance of pupils of Traveller background is often better than is usually seen. Parents mostly value the good care taken of their children, but some say they are not always given enough information about minor bumps and accidents.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, school leaders and entire staff work well together as a team with a shared commitment to do all in their power to ensure that every pupil achieves the school aims of learning, living and smiling' during their time at Laburnum Lower School. Leaders' monitoring of lessons and individual pupils' progress has given them an accurate picture of the school's strengths and those areas that can be improved. It has also enabled them to maintain mostly good teaching throughout the school.

Equality of opportunity is promoted well, as evidenced in the achievement of pupils with

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quite severe learning needs and the friendly way in which they are treated by their peers. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn about different religions, but their awareness of and involvement in the local community is very much stronger than their appreciation of the many different cultures that make up modern United Kingdom and the wider world. Safeguarding arrangements meet legal requirements. Any incidents are appropriately recorded, but the loose-leaf format used does not represent the very best practice.

The school works hard to communicate with parents and keep them informed, but a minority feel that the headteacher and governors are not responsive enough to suggestions and say that 'the school is very defensive'.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Many of those children who join the school in the Nursery start with skills and capabilities that are significantly below those expected for their ages. Good teaching and a range of stimulating activities, both indoors and in the outdoor learning areas, help the children to make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their attainment at the end of the Reception Year is below average. Opportunities are missed for children to develop their early writing skills by making their own labels for displays and activity areas. Children are helped to develop their improving social skills, although these remain below average. When engaged in similar activities together, such as role-playing in the 'Post Office' in the Reception class, for example, each child tends to play independently rather than interacting with others.



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The children feel happy and secure because they are looked after well by the many adults who work with them. In this well run provision, each child's progress is carefully tracked through regular notes made of their progress and through digital photos which document children's activities and achievements.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 express mixed views about the school. Many express effusive praise for what they consider to be a well-run school where their children are happy and are making good progress. A minority express strong dissatisfaction with some aspects of the school. In particular, several wrote to say that they are unhappy about the way in which it deals with suggestions and concerns. A number would like more information about their children's progress and about how they can help their children at home. Inspectors judged that parents are provided with good information on children's progress and that they are helped to support their learning. Nevertheless, if some parents feel it is difficult to raise issues with the school, then that is a concern that needs to be resolved. Inspectors have recommended, therefore, that governors review the way in which suggestions and complaints are dealt with so that parents feel more comfortable and confident in approaching the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Laburnum Lower 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 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 148 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	74	8	19	1	2	2	5
The school keeps my child safe	30	71	9	21	1	2	2	5
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	57	12	29	3	7	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	67	10	24	3	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	31	74	7	17	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	67	7	17	5	12	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	74	9	21	1	2	1	2
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)	27	64	9	21	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	62	12	29	3	7	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	71	7	17	4	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	67	6	14	3	7	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	32	76	4	10	2	5	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	74	7	17	2	5	1	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laburnum Lower School, Sandy SG19 1HQ

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to visit your school. Laburnum is a good school where you really are all 'learning, living and smiling'! We were pleased to see such good behaviour and how keen you are to learn. Many of you told us how much your teachers and the other adults in the school help you. We agree that it is the good teaching, and the extra support for those that need it, that is helping you to make good progress throughout the school from Nursery to Year 4 and to reach the standards expected for your ages.

You do not do quite as well in writing as you do in reading and mathematics, so we have suggested ways of bringing your writing on further. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to write. That will mean, in some cases, more writing in your own words rather than using worksheets, especially for those of you who find your work too easy. We would like you all to take greater care with your spellings, so please make sure that you always check them. We have also asked your teachers to be sure to tell you when you make spelling mistakes.

The children in the Nursery and in Acorn class enjoy all the activities that go on, but they could be practising their writing skills more as well. We have asked their teachers to involve the children in writing their own labels for some of the displays and activities in and outside their classrooms.

We were impressed with the way you are all involved in checking how well you are doing in the regular target-setting meetings. You are not all so well aware of the targets when they are on the walls in your classroom. We have asked the teachers to make it easier for you to refer to your targets when you are writing. You can help with this too by doing your very best to achieve your targets.

Many of your parents told us how good Laburnum is, but some said they were less pleased with the school because they did not think it listened enough to their ideas and any concerns they have raised. We have asked governors to look at the way in which the school deals with suggestions so that it can help to make them feel as positive about the school as other parents.

Thank you again for looking after us, and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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