

The Len Wastell Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114808
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338450
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R Harris
Headteacher	L Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed five teachers and nine lessons. They met with a group of governors, members of staff and pupils, looked at a range of school policies and plans, records of pupils' progress, questionnaires returned by staff and the 36 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

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

- how the school supports boys' achievement in reading
- the progress of pupils in Reception classes in different aspects of their development
- measures taken by the school to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Information about the school

Pupils travel from a wide area to attend this small school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion who come from homes where English is not the first language has grown significantly in the past few years and is now broadly average, although none are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average for a school of this size. Far more pupils than average are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school holds Healthy Schools status and the Inclusion Quality Mark award.

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

This is a good school where pupils receive a high degree of care and support. All of the staff provide excellent support and encouragement and, as a result, the pupils are proud of their accomplishments and are not afraid to attempt new activities. Pupils grow into confident young learners who show respect for one another's views. Pupils are well behaved in and out of lessons. They feel very safe and secure in school and are confident that they can approach any adult on the staff if they have a problem.

Children's skills vary significantly when they first start in Reception but many are at low levels for their age in most areas of their learning. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. Last year the school identified that pupils were not making enough progress in writing. This has been successfully addressed this year by the introduction of an effective programme to promote writing, which has enthused staff and pupils alike.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have warm relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Pupils who have significant emotional and behavioural difficulties are engaged well by the activities set by teachers and receive excellent support from teaching assistants to help them make the right choices. Pupils enjoy the wide range of experiences offered through the curriculum. They wrote reports and made careful drawings of the butterflies they saw on a recent visit to 'Tropical Wings', showing careful attention to detail and a good range of vocabulary.

The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide a strong team which drives the school's work forward successfully. The school works extremely hard to engage parents and carers in their children's education and, consequently, there is great support for school initiatives in, for example, healthy eating and the management of pupils' behaviour. Highly effective partnerships with outside agencies are invaluable in helping staff cater for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A well-organised monitoring programme, to which governors actively contribute, means that leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are aware that community cohesion is a weaker element of their work; some actions have been taken but as yet, the pupils' understanding of communities, faiths and beliefs outside their own experience, is limited. School development planning prioritises the correct areas for improvement but plans often lack clear success criteria which makes it difficult for leaders to evaluate the impact of their actions, and milestones to gauge their progress. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully raised pupils' attainment and increased their attendance so that both are now average. These improvements, coupled with the good leadership of the headteacher and the strong support from staff, governors and parents and carers, mean that the school is well placed to continue to

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improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve community cohesion by:
 - developing meaningful links with schools and communities within the wider United Kingdom and globally
 - extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultures, religions and beliefs other than their own.
- Strengthen school improvement planning by identifying clear and measurable success criteria by which leaders can judge the impact of their plans and milestones by which they can check their progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment has risen steadily in recent years. It is now average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and try their best in lessons. They work well individually, in pairs and small groups. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, pupils shared their ideas and discussed the best adjectives to use in their story maps about the adventures of 'Winnie the Witch'. All pupils were able to play a full part in the lesson because the activities for different groups were very closely matched to pupils' different needs and abilities. Teaching assistants made an excellent contribution, encouraging pupils to offer their suggestions and asking the right questions to extend pupils' thinking. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds and those from homes where English is not the first language, achieve well and thoroughly enjoy learning. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make especially good progress in small intervention groups, where they develop their confidence and skills in literacy.

The school's work to gain Healthy School's status has helped the pupils gain an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, which the vast majority adopt. Many enjoy nutritious school lunches and packed lunches nearly always contain healthy options. Regular physical education lessons introduce them to a variety of sports and a good proportion of pupils participate in after-school sports clubs such as football and multi-skills. Pupils make a very good contribution to their school and local community through their work on the school council, partnership activities with the local member of parliament and through their work on citizenship. They discuss the United Nations Children's Rights Charter, for example, and debate the positive and negatives of allowing the local council to build over children's playgrounds. They make a sound contribution to overseas communities through fund-raising activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good with pupils showing a good sense of right and wrong. Cultural development is satisfactory as pupils' knowledge of faiths and cultures beyond their own experience is more limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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?

A wide range of activities is organised to make learning fun for the pupils. Pupils enjoy mathematics because they receive a great many opportunities to practise and improve their skills on computers. First-hand practical experiences often promote high quality work. Year 2 pupils planted vegetable seeds and plants in the quadrangle for example, and monitored the plants' growth. They produced carefully labelled close observational drawings and discovered the best conditions for plant growth. Year 1 pupils enjoyed exploring aspects of their locality, drawing maps of their journey and highlighting significant buildings such as the police and fire stations.

The teaching of basic skills forms an important part of the school's curriculum. Many different strategies are used to promote literacy, including regular visits to the school library which contains an excellent range of material to stimulate pupils' interest. Reading skills are practised every day and the headteacher assesses pupils' reading progress individually on a regular basis. Reading is set to become a priority for improvement next year, with plans in place to extend the skills of staff and provide specialist support for pupils who fall behind. Useful opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English, for example in science when they draw and label diagrams to illustrate their work on forces.

Pupils with special educational needs receive good teaching and high levels of care and attention. Those with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties benefit greatly from the

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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secure relationships they enjoy with teachers and teaching assistants. Their needs are quickly and carefully assessed and individual programmes implemented to help them learn and develop successfully. Their progress is tracked very carefully to assess the effectiveness of the interventions. Excellent links with external support agencies ensure that pupils with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties receive specialist help and counselling. Very effective work has been done to raise attendance levels and this has ensured that pupils do not miss important parts of their education.

Teachers engage their pupils well in lessons, ensuring that they are actively involved in question and answer sessions and group discussions. At the beginning of lessons, teachers always make it clear to pupils what they will be learning and what they have to do to achieve success. This is an effective way of harnessing their motivation and enthusiasm. Although computers are used very effectively to help pupils develop secure numeracy skills, there is limited use of technology to promote their literacy skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a firm but sensitive steer to the school's work, embedding ambition successfully amongst staff and driving improvement well. She provides an outstanding example to staff in her day-to-day dealings with pupils, parents and carers. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire completely agree that the school is well led and managed. They value the relationships built up over many years with the headteacher and assistant headteacher and feel able to approach them if they have the slightest concern. Parents and carers receive very good information about their children's progress and comprehensive advice about how to support their learning and development.

There are good procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding policies are good and reviewed regularly by governors to ensure their effectiveness. Staff are trained effectively in safeguarding and new staff checked carefully to ensure their suitability. Leaders promote equality of opportunity well, analysing information about pupils' progress to ensure all are achieving well. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement has narrowed significantly since the last inspection because of successful strategies to involve boys more actively in their learning. Racist incidents are extremely rare, but senior leaders tackle them promptly if they do occur. Governors play an active role in supporting the school and monitoring its work. Many

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have been involved over a long period and know the school and community extremely well. Governors are often in school and maintain good communication with parents and carers. The school is a cohesive community. It has developed excellent links with other local schools which benefit teachers' professional development and curriculum improvements. Links with the parish church, health and the neighbouring children's centre are extremely productive in supporting pupils' personal development and general welfare. A basic audit of provision for community cohesion has been completed and an action plan is in place to secure improvement. Parents and carers have ready access to a wide range of advice and information to support their children and families.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Many children have difficulties with social and communication skills when they start in Reception but they quickly settle in and begin to develop their confidence and independence. Classrooms are bright and stimulating and children come into school happily each morning, ready to engage in all the activities provided for them. They make good progress over the year and the majority of them reach nationally expected levels by the time they transfer to Year 1 in most areas of their learning. Literacy has been a weaker aspect of their development in the past but recent analysis of progress, confirmed by inspection findings, shows that progress here, too is good.

The development of language and communication skills is a high priority in Reception and adults take every opportunity to model good language and engage children in discussion. One group of children, for example, composed music for 'The Ugly Bugs' Ball', eagerly discussing the different instruments and the sounds they made, with the

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teaching assistant.

There is a good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those that children choose for themselves. The outdoor area is presently being developed to include a sheltered section so that children can access learning outdoors all the year round. At present, there are few activities available outdoors to support children's independent learning in literacy and numeracy.

Good attention is given to ensuring that children are inducted carefully into school life. Policies and procedures to ensure their safety are regularly reviewed. Children's progress is assessed and tracked carefully. Prompt action is taken if specific children need support from external agencies, for example with behaviour or communication.

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 who responded to the questionnaire were extremely positive about the school's work. All agreed that the school was well led and managed, that the teaching was good and their children made good progress. They were very happy that their children were kept safe and that the school helped their children to adopt healthy lifestyles. Inspectors agreed with their positive views of the school. A very small number of parents and carers expressed some concerns about their children's progress, the way the school encouraged healthy lifestyles and how the school took their views and concerns on board. Inspectors did not agree with their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Len Wastell Infant 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 122 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	69	9	25	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	83	6	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	64	13	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	58	14	39	1	3	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)	17	47	14	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	50	18	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	67	11	31	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	75	9	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	81	7	19	0	0	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Len Wastell Infant School, Basildon, SS13 3AB

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently and telling us your opinions about your school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us form a clear view about how well your school works. You go to a good school and these are some of the important things we found out about it:

- all the adults take really good care of you and keep you very safe in school
- you understand what it means to be healthy, and many of you enjoy the nutritious school lunches and bring healthy options in your packed lunches
- you support and respect each other well
- your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school
- you work hard in lessons and try to do your best
- the children in Reception settle into school quickly and enjoy all the activities organised for them
- the teaching is good and helps you to make good progress
- the adults work hard to organise lots of activities to make learning fun.

We have asked your headteacher and governors to establish better links with schools and communities in different areas of the United Kingdom and overseas to help you learn more about cultures, faiths and beliefs other than your own. We have also asked them to plan school improvements more carefully so they will know how well things are going and how successful they have been.

You can all play your part in helping your school become even better by making sure you continue to work hard, behave well and attend school every day.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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