

# Longmeadow Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135083
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341612
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Melvyn Hemmings

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	380
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Gardner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Laraine Hodgson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Oaks Cross Stevenage Hertfordshire
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@longmeadow.herts.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons or parts of lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and the school's improvement partner. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 91 parent questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- whether pupils in Years 3 to 6 make sufficient progress
- how effectively leaders are working to raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics
- the impact of identified weaknesses in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage on children's learning.

## Information about the school

This larger than average primary school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Nursery and Reception classes. It is part of a federation with a nearby school, and the two schools have the same governing body. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The large majority of pupils are White British. The onsite pre-school provision is managed privately and is inspected separately. The school is the joint lead agency for the Broadwater Children's Centre, which is on the school site. The school has gained a number of national awards, such as the 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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

The school provides a welcoming and friendly setting in which to learn. Senior leaders provide focused educational direction and a clear vision for school improvement, which has started to make a difference. All in school share this vision and a good team ethos is evident. Leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this enables them to correctly prioritise areas for development. This is evident in the way they have worked diligently to accelerate the progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6, which has not been sufficient in recent years. Robust procedures for checking their progress have been introduced and teachers have been made more accountable for the progress their pupils make. As a result of these actions, most pupils in Years 3 to 6 now make satisfactory progress and an increased number make good progress.

Throughout the school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and by the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points on entering school. Leaders identified that English and mathematics were weaker aspects of pupils' performance and have worked closely with the local authority to improve teachers' expertise in delivering these subjects. Individual targets are now set for all pupils in both subjects. The impact of these actions is seen in an improvement in reading standards, and pupils' mathematical calculation skills are now secure. Nonetheless, weaknesses remain in pupils' writing skills, especially in their ability to use a sufficiently wide vocabulary to enrich their creative writing and to write purposefully in other subjects. There are also shortcomings in their problem-solving ability in mathematics.

The main reason that progress is satisfactory, rather than better, is that teaching and learning are inconsistent in quality. Some teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to set suitably challenging work to match the abilities of different groups of pupils. The quality of feedback given to pupils on how to improve their work varies between classes. Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not rigorous enough to iron out these inconsistencies. Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy their activities. They are polite and considerate to others. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and pupils say they feel safe while in school. The local authority has worked with the school to improve leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as this was identified as an area of weakness. Although leadership is now satisfactory, there remains some lack of organisation, particularly in the outdoor area, and planning too often emphasises what children are to do, rather than what they are to learn. The impact of action taken to bring about improvement is not robustly evaluated. As a result, children's progress is satisfactory

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rather than better. Involvement in the Children's Centre has enabled some parents and carers to develop their skills in supporting their children's learning. This has made a positive contribution to the progress they make at home and in school. Being part of the Shephalbury Meadow Federation has enabled the school to establish a nurture group to support vulnerable pupils and fund a pupil support worker and a learning mentor. This has proved particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Its leaders have focused on improving areas of weakness and there is a trend of improvement in key areas, such as progress in Years 3 to 6. The school's self-evaluation provides the leadership and management with an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and plans reflect what is needed to do to bring about further improvement. Management systems are rooted sufficiently to enable the school to continue improving.

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

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by:
  - extending pupils' vocabulary to enrich their creative writing and providing more opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum
  - improving pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring teachers always use assessment information effectively to set challenging work for all groups of pupils that reflect their needs
  - providing pupils with clear guidance about how they can improve their work
  - increasing the rigour of leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - improving planning so that it emphasises what children are to learn rather than what they are to do
  - ensuring leaders rigorously evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement
  - improving the organisation and use of the outdoor area to effectively develop children's skills across all the areas of learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

**3**

Pupils are interested in their work and maintain concentration for long periods. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups and show interest in the views of others. They

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They speak confidently when contributing to discussions and listen attentively. They do not have a sufficiently wide vocabulary to enable them to add interest and excitement to their creative writing. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation skills, but they are less adept at using these skills in problem-solving activities that involve real-life situations. Pupils show a sound understanding of key scientific ideas and use suitable skills in designing and carrying out investigations. They use information and communication technology appropriately to support learning in other subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievements of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive. This rate of progress ensures that pupils reach broadly average standards at Year 6.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council, and in so doing make a positive contribution to the life of the school. They contribute well to the wider community by raising money for charities and taking part in local events. Most pupils behave well, though a few have behavioural difficulties and occasionally their actions disrupt the learning of others. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well, by eating a balanced diet, for example, and taking regular physical exercise. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</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

<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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<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>
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### How effective is the provision?

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and so can confidently explain new ideas. They ensure pupils are clear about what they are to learn and how to successfully complete their tasks. They plan lessons carefully to build on previous work so pupils can use what they already know to support their current learning. Assessment information is not always used effectively to plan work that matches pupils' individual needs. This shortcoming results in pupils being given work that is either too easy or too hard, and this limits the progress they make. Feedback to pupils, both orally and through marking, does not always provide clear guidance on how they might improve. Teaching assistants are usually soundly deployed to support pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Curriculum planning ensures that work given to pupils builds systematically on previous work. It does not always effectively indicate how suggested activities can be tailored to the particular needs of different groups. The school is beginning to develop links between subjects so that pupils can use skills gained in one subject to support their learning in others. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in subjects other than English. A good feature of the curriculum is the range of enrichment opportunities that are much appreciated by pupils and parents. These include extra-curricular activities in which many pupils enthusiastically participate.

The school provides a welcoming learning environment for individuals and groups of pupils. Robust child protection procedures and risk assessments are firmly in place. All staff are aware of the steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Support for vulnerable pupils is an established part of provision and plays a useful role in fostering their learning and development.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are not complacent, knowing there is more to do to raise pupils' attainment. They embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily by focusing the school on priorities. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not yet rigorous enough to fully resolve inconsistency in the quality of teaching. The school promotes equal opportunity

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and tackles discrimination in a satisfactory way. It has relevant information about different groups of pupils and evaluates their performance across the curriculum and contribution to school life. All safeguarding requirements are met and arrangements are systematically reviewed. Leaders actively promote community cohesion within school and are reaching out to other communities. This has a positive impact in school, which is a largely cohesive community. Leaders acknowledge that the procedures for dealing with the few instances of unacceptable behaviour require improvement. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are suitably involved in setting priorities for improvement.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children start in the Nursery class with skill levels that are below those expected for their age. Their progress and achievement are satisfactory. The arrangements for introducing children into the Nursery are sound and enable them to quickly settle into everyday routines.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have positive attitudes, being keen to learn and working and playing harmoniously. Relationships between adults and children are good, which impacts positively on the progress children make. There is a suitable balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children. These factors make a helpful contribution to children's development as independent learners. The main reason for progress being satisfactory rather than better is that planning tends to emphasise what children are to do rather than what they are to learn. As a result,



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observations and assessments lack sufficient focus on what children have achieved and the next steps needed to develop their learning. In addition, the organisation and use of the outdoor area does not always develop fully children's knowledge, understanding and skills across all the areas of learning. . The recent support from the local authority has improved leadership, which is currently satisfactory. Valuable changes have been made, such as improving the indoor learning environment, but the school's leaders have yet to fully evaluate the impact of initiatives on children's learning. The quality of care, including the promotion of children's well being, is satisfactory. Parents are kept appropriately informed of their children's progress.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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

**Views of parents and carers**

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to inspection questionnaires were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. A few parents did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence shows that the procedures for dealing with the few instances of such behaviour require some improvement. A very small minority of parents did not think the school informed them enough about their children's progress. Inspection evidence indicates the school provides appropriate information.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Longmeadow 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 380 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	54	42	46	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	43	48	53	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	31	54	59	9	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	34	52	57	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	33	57	63	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	20	64	70	8	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	26	62	68	5	5	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)	28	31	56	62	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	26	60	66	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	14	54	59	17	19	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	12	64	70	7	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	16	18	65	71	6	7	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	32	57	63	4	4	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 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 Longmeadow Primary School, Stevenage SG2 8LT

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. Yours is a satisfactory school that helps you reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave.

What we found out about your school

It provides a welcoming setting in which to learn.

The contribution you make to the life of the school is good, such as being a member of the school council.

Most of you behave well and enjoy coming to school.

Recent improvements mean that those of you in Years 3 to 6 are making better progress than in the past.

Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe, in and around school and on visits.

All the staff and governors are working hard to help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now

Improve your literacy skills, especially in writing, and your problem-solving skills in mathematics.

Make sure all of you are always given work that challenges you to do your best and advice on how you can make your work better.

Help children in Nursery and Reception to do even better than they are at present.

You can all help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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