

Lydden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118400
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358336
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan King
Headteacher	Carole Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons involving four teachers, and held meetings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, representative staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 44 parents and carers, and scrutinised others from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress pupils make in Key Stage 1 and in writing across the school.
- The extent to which teaching has improved since the last inspection in meeting the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes.
- The start children make to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills.

Information about the school

This village school is much smaller than most primary schools. Pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught in mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school after Reception is above average. A privately run pre-school is accommodated on the school site and is inspected separately by Ofsted. The school's most recent awards include Healthy School, Activemark and Quality in Study Support and Extended Services 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Lydden Primary School has improved since its last inspection and now provides its pupils with a good quality of education. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate, and staff and governors use this information well to address the most urgent priorities. While maintaining existing strengths, the headteacher has led improvements with determination, particularly in teaching and learning that have accelerated pupils' progress and raised their attainment. As a result of these improvements and good leadership and management in monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives, the school has a good capacity to sustain development in the future.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and school life as a whole. They enjoy the fact that they know one another well and take pleasure from caring for each other through the 'buddy' system. Their positive approach is a key factor in pupils' good achievement. Children make a good start to their education in Reception and develop a strong foundation for later learning. Pupils continue to make good progress through the school so that their attainment by the time they move to secondary school is generally above average, although this varies from year to year because of significant differences in the abilities in each year group. Attainment in mathematics is consistently higher than in English, although an ongoing emphasis on improving pupils' writing is gradually closing the gap. Pupils present their work well but some pupils are slow to develop fluent handwriting because this has not been a school priority and the school lacks a whole-school policy. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their thinking before committing their thoughts to paper. However, they are not always required to write at sufficient length in the time given and do not have enough opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects. Tracking pupils' progress and taking action to address possible underachievement has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection. Teachers use this information effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils, so that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and more-able pupils, achieve well. Pupils who join the school at later stages in their primary education make similar rates of progress to their peers.

Good care, guidance and support ensure pupils' safety and well-being, and make a valuable contribution to pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe and live healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good knowledge of the learning expected of their own group in lessons and reflect maturely on how well they have done, but are not always as clear about their individual English targets as in mathematics. Parents and carers have regular opportunities to review their children's learning with teachers through reports and consultation meetings. However, a minority of parents do not feel that the school listens and responds to their suggestions and concerns.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing to that of the level of reading and mathematics, by:
 - requiring pupils to write at greater length
 - giving them more opportunities to practise their writing in other subjects
 - implementing a whole-school policy for handwriting
 - ensuring that pupils have a greater understanding of their English targets.
- Provide more opportunities for parents and carers to share their views.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter the school with a level of skills which are broadly as expected for their age. Pupils' enthusiasm for, and interest in, learning contributes positively to the good progress they make. They say that teachers try to make learning fun. This was seen in lessons when pupils were encouraged to use their imagination to capture a jungle atmosphere, which helped to extend their vocabulary to write their own mythical stories. Pupils work well independently, effectively supporting their learning because they take time to work things out for themselves, for example when solving numeracy word problems involving addition and subtraction. Pupils' speaking skills are well developed because they often work together in groups, discussing issues sensibly and articulating their thinking. Only occasionally do pupils need a gentle reminder about working hard. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their attainment is monitored regularly and the information used to provide support and work at an appropriate level of challenge. Pupils are tolerant of difference, knowing that a few pupils with emotional difficulties find it challenging to adhere to the school's high expectations of behaviour.

Pupils' good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, together with their personal qualities, equip them well for the future. Pupils are polite and have a strong sense of responsibility, for example when sharing their views at a school council meeting about ways to encourage healthy lunch boxes. Pupils' financial awareness is a particular strength because they have a number of opportunities for business enterprise activities, some organised by the parents' association. Pupils have good links within the locality through the local churches or when inviting local pensioners to the Harvest Tea. They are developing their understanding of broader society and are using their language skills through electronic links with other schools in the United Kingdom and abroad. The 'continent' system for grouping pupils for whole-school activities is used well to promote study of different parts of the world. However, these developments are still at too early a stage to have made a strong impact on pupils' understanding of life beyond their immediate community.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Improvements in the quality of teaching have led to work being matched more closely to the varied abilities and ages of the pupils in each class. Teachers know their pupils well and use assessment information effectively to plan the next steps for learning. This usage is now a strength and teachers ensure that learning is taken forward quickly because of the effective way they organise the teaching of new skills and knowledge for different groups of pupils. Teaching assistants are well briefed and prepared for the activities they undertake with groups or individuals. Pupils are given good opportunities to evaluate work for themselves and are regularly required to respond to teachers' comments and questions to extend earlier learning, although they are not sufficiently clear about their personal writing targets. Teachers are consistent in their use of whole-school strategies to manage their classes. Pupils respond well to established routines so that behaviour is good and little time is used managing the behaviour of a few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils particularly appreciate the awards for focused effort and behaviour. Teachers use a variety of good-quality resources to support pupils' understanding, but do not always make the most of the investment in interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' imagination and illustrate learning.

The curriculum fosters all aspects of pupils' development, including their personal, social and emotional development, satisfactorily. Some links are made across subjects but these are underused to develop pupils' basic skills, particularly in literacy, within the context of

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other study themes. Good promotion of healthy lifestyles is seen in the Healthy School and Activemark awards. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about school visits, including the opportunities provided for residential experiences. The range of extra-curricular provision is satisfactory for a school of this size. The consistent approach of adults fosters a caring environment where pupils feel safe. Pupils are supported well through the school, particularly at times of transition into the next stage of their education and development.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and governors are working as an effective team with clear direction and a shared commitment to building on recent successes. Many governors are new to their roles and the governing body has carried out a self-review of its practices as the basis for further development. There are effective links between governors and staff, and the governing body is not afraid to ask questions to help it to understand the extent of pupils' achievement. Staff use their good links with other schools and outside agencies to support professional development and to provide a range of activities, including sport, which this small school might otherwise find difficult to offer. Additional provision, such as holiday clubs recognised in the Quality in Study Support and Extended Services award, is effectively supporting pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Safeguarding arrangements are in line with government requirements. The school regularly reviews potential dangers around the site and works with a range of key agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity by monitoring the performance of individuals and taking action to remove any obstacles to learning or well-being, although the impact of specific interventions is not always evaluated rigorously. Adults promote community cohesion well in school and the local community, but recognise that further work is necessary to extend pupils' understanding of the way of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and in other countries. The school is valued by the local community, which is shown in the number of volunteers giving time to support school activities.

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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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are broadly in line with those expected for their age, although there is significant variation from year to year. Children make good progress relative to their starting points in all areas of learning. As a result of a strong focus on phonics and number, children's early literacy and numeracy skills on entry to Year 1 have been above average in recent years, giving them a strong foundation for further learning and contributing to improved attainment across the school. Children respond to the good role models of pupils in Year 1 and strive to learn successfully alongside them. Welfare requirements are fully met and care is taken over the health, safety and well-being of all children. Consequently, children are happy and enjoy learning.

The balance of activities that are led by an adult and those chosen by children themselves is good. The outdoor area provides a stimulating place for outdoor learning but children are not given enough encouragement to use this facility to the full. Some areas of the classroom are cluttered so that specific aspects and displays, such as the 'Space' section seen during the inspection, lack impact because they are difficult to see. Good links with pre-school settings, including the onsite facility, help smooth the transition into school. Good leadership and management are shown in the effective arrangements to support parents and carers in sharing in their child's learning. There is a very positive engagement with parents and carers, with many parents commenting specifically on how well their child has settled and is progressing.

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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

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and a large majority are positive about the school and their children's experience. There is common agreement that most pupils enjoy school and are safe, that the school promotes healthy lifestyles and that pupils are prepared well for the future. A minority of parents and carers expressed concern about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and that their suggestions and concerns are not dealt with well. Inspection evidence finds that staff deal well with behaviour, including that of pupils with behavioural difficulties, so that there is little disruption to the learning of the class. The school provides parents and carers with many opportunities to understand their children's learning and progress. However, it has been less successful in finding ways to ensure that they feel listened to.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lydden 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	45	14	32	6	12	4	9
The school keeps my child safe	26	49	10	23	6	14	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	41	11	25	8	18	6	14
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	45	13	30	5	11	6	14
The teaching is good at this school	21	48	11	25	7	16	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	36	16	36	5	11	7	16
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	36	23	52	3	7	2	5
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)	12	27	19	43	4	9	4	9
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	41	13	30	7	16	6	14
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	30	8	18	9	20	9	20
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	30	14	32	9	20	7	16
The school is led and managed effectively	12	27	16	36	6	14	10	23
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	45	10	23	4	9	8	18

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 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.



17 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lydden Primary School, Dover CT15 7LA

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and found the information you gave us very valuable. This letter is to explain to you what we found out.

We judge that your school is good and that you achieve well during your time there because your teachers and teaching assistants help you to make good progress. Teachers take good care of you and plan work which really helps you to enjoy your learning. You know how to look after yourselves and to stay safe, fit and healthy. You enjoy school and get on well together. You behave well and help new pupils to settle in quickly. You help one another well around the school and play a full part in village life.

We have made some suggestions for teachers to help you to do even better so that you do as well in writing as you already do in reading and mathematics. We have asked the school to:

- give you more opportunities to practise your writing in other subjects and expect you to write more in the time given
- make sure that you have more examples of good handwriting for you to practise for yourselves
- ensure you know your own literacy targets, not just the target for the lesson.

You can help by remembering to ask if there is anything you do not understand. Please thank your parents or carers for returning the inspection questionnaire. It was really helpful to hear their views. We have asked the staff to make sure that your parents have more opportunities to share their views about the school.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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