

Loudwater Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110524
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356769
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Randall
Headteacher	Clare Cunnington
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 19 lessons and observed 8 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, parents and carers in the playground, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations, and analyses of pupils' work and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by the parents and carers of 122 pupils, and by staff and pupils.

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

- The effectiveness of measures to raise attainment in mathematics after the fall in results at the end of Year 6 last year.
- The extent to which marking has improved since the last inspection.
- Whether the school's pace of improvement is sufficient to bring about rapid change.

Information about the school

Loudwater is smaller than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with about a quarter from minority ethnic origins, mainly of Asian heritage. Just over a tenth of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The percentage known to be entitled to free school meals is well below average. The school has Healthy School status. A breakfast club is run by the school daily.

The headteacher was appointed just over two years ago. There have been other changes of teaching staff since then.

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

Loudwater is a satisfactory school. Pupils' attainment is broadly average in English and a little below average in mathematics. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, but there is some unevenness in the rate of progress between classes. In 2010, the Year 6 test results fell sharply in mathematics, mainly because most of the emphasis that year had been successfully placed on raising attainment in English. Despite clear improvements this year, some pupils still struggle to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of numeracy in new situations, and the most able pupils are not always challenged enough to reach higher levels in their learning.

Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good practice, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, but it is more variable in Key Stage 2. Relationships are good across the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and, when encouraged to take an active role in lessons, they participate with enthusiasm and progress well. At times, however, opportunities are missed for pupils to work independently or collaboratively and the pace of lessons slows. Work with an external consultant to raise attainment and increase progress in reading, writing and mathematics has given teachers more confidence to analyse data in more depth, and to plan work that is more suited to pupils' abilities. Marking has improved, but it does not always show pupils clearly how to improve their work and they are not always given sufficient time to respond to the comments in their books.

The headteacher has created a welcoming and friendly learning environment that is attractive to pupils. Many aspects of pupils' personal development are good, reflecting the school's positive ethos and caring approach. Pupils say they feel safe at school and almost all parents and carers agree with them. Pupils have a good understanding of internet safety and keep alert to risks online. Their behaviour is good in class and around the school, and the few instances of challenging behaviour are managed well. Pupils grow their own fruit and vegetables, and many adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the school and local community, for example as members of the school council overseeing the renewal of the school library.

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for bringing about improvement that has led to gains in pastoral areas of the school's work. However, the pace of change has been undermined by inconsistencies in the quality of provision. Subject leaders do not take enough responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, or spend enough time evaluating the impact of initiatives to bring about improvement. Despite some good pockets of progress, such as in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, learning is not sufficiently accelerated to ensure consistently good outcomes for all pupils. The governing body's considerable drive and determination, very ably led, have brought a renewed vigour to creating the momentum for change. Self-

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evaluation is generally accurate, with regular monitoring of teaching by the headteacher. In view of the steady progress to date, there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are secure enough in their learning to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in new situations
 - ensuring that all pupils, especially the most able, are consistently challenged.
- By April 2012, improve teaching so that the large majority is good or better by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in their own independent learning
 - ensuring that all marking shows pupils the next steps in their learning
 - enabling pupils to respond to teachers' written comments, so that they improve their work.
- Increase the momentum of change to accelerate improvement by:
 - developing the role of senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, and the impact of initiatives, more robustly
 - ensuring that the governing body builds rigorously on its work in evaluating the pace of improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are generally in line with national expectations for their age, and the attainment levels seen in the older year groups reflect satisfactory achievement. Pupils enjoy their learning and have a thirst for knowledge. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 derived enormous pleasure from an Anglo-Saxon history workshop, learning new skills, such as candle making and calligraphy, and finding out about everyday life in Saxon times. Pupils in Year 5 could discuss the features of good story telling before having a go themselves. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' learning or for them to reflect upon their own and others' experiences, not only in mathematics. For example, Year 6 pupils worked together to create sentences using randomly selected connectives, but were not invited to discuss how different connectives, such as 'however' and 'furthermore', influenced the wording of the second part of the sentence.

The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The school identifies their needs promptly and ensures that they have appropriate support programmes, although the impact of this support on individual pupils' progress varies considerably. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting groups of pupils in their learning and working with pupils whose circumstances make them potentially

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vulnerable. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do as well as their counterparts nationally and make satisfactory progress.

Pupils support their local community well through tidying up litter, singing to the elderly and taking part in the annual Act of Remembrance for those who gave their lives in times of war. They are prepared satisfactorily for secondary school, with average basic skills. Pupils benefit from 'Enterprise Week' each year, which encourages them to raise money in interesting ways for good causes, working together as teams. Pupils have good social skills and a good awareness of moral values. They have a good understanding of other cultures through mixing with pupils from different backgrounds and celebrating others' traditions. Pupils observed Black History Month, when they researched the lives of famous role models.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	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

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?

In some classes teachers use questioning well to draw out pupils' knowledge and to discuss new ideas. For example, Year 2 pupils made good gains in their understanding as they explored how adding the letter 'y' to a noun turns it into an adjective. This good practice is not consistent in all classes, however. The use of assessment to plan work that is matched to pupils' abilities is more accurate this year, because of a greater use of data, but there is still sometimes not enough challenge for the most able pupils, particularly in

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Key Stage 2 mathematics classes. Too much reliance on worksheets in some classes prevents some pupils from expressing their ideas in imaginative ways.

The curriculum focuses on developing pupils' basic skills, with less emphasis on creative subjects. There are some good links across subjects, especially in using ICT to present information and make graphs. Pupils take part in plenty of clubs, including gymnastics and signing. They go on fewer visits to places of interest than is often the case in other schools. Pastoral care is good. Pupils are treated as individuals and the staff know each of them very well. The school has a family atmosphere and is a harmonious place to work and play. Pupils receive good advice about keeping safe and adopting healthy lifestyles, and the school monitors and follows up attendance well. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but there are inconsistencies in how thoroughly their progress is checked during and after interventions, and the school's leaders have not analysed in sufficient depth why this may be the case. The breakfast club engages the pupils who attend in interesting activities and gives them a settled start to the day so they are ready to learn. Pupils of all ages mix together well, and the club has helped to greatly improve rates of attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement that is shared by other members of staff, and initiatives to drive this forward have led to successful outcomes in terms of a positive school ethos, improved behaviour and pastoral care, and pupils' good personal development. However, the pace of change has not been rapid enough to secure accelerated learning for most pupils because monitoring is not carried out widely enough or rigorously enough, and points for development are not followed up swiftly enough.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, enabling all its pupils to take a full role in its activities. One parent said, 'I cannot speak highly enough about Loudwater School's inclusion of my son. They have embraced every aspect of his education and he is thriving because of it.' There remain some inconsistencies in the provision, especially in the effectiveness of teaching in meeting individual needs.

The effective governing body provides the school with a good balance of challenge and support to senior leaders. It ensures that safeguarding arrangements are good, with excellent records kept, and staff fully aware of the school's procedures should they have any concerns. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has conducted an audit of its provision and drawn up an action plan, reaching out well to its local community. Pupils have the opportunity to mix with pupils from a range of different cultures from

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other schools and to take part in musical and sporting activities together. They also correspond with pupils in Zambia and sponsor a child's education in Thailand.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly because of the secure, happy atmosphere and the attractive learning environment, and make good progress across all the areas of learning because of consistently good teaching. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn, and ensure that their experiences are exciting and purposeful. Children have good access to the outside areas, where there is also plenty for them to do, although they are not always encouraged to try different activities. Outstanding teaching of the sounds that letters make enables children to read with confidence and encourages them to start writing. Imaginative role-play areas, such as a garden centre, enable children to learn about the wider world. Careful assessment gives staff a clear idea of how well children are progressing, and planning takes into account their interests and aspirations. Good leadership and management have led to the building of a strong staff team who works well with parents and carers in supporting their children's learning.

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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

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was well above average for a primary school. Parents and carers mainly agreed that their children enjoyed school and were kept safe. There were many positive written comments about the school's work, and some negative ones. A few parents and carers were concerned how long it had taken to resolve a behaviour issue in one particular class; a few were concerned that their children were not making sufficient progress; and, a few were concerned about whether their child had sufficient opportunities to take part in class assemblies and performances. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour has improved and is now good; that sometimes the most able pupils are not always challenged enough; and that the school tries its best to include all pupils in performances and events. The headteacher is committed to monitoring pupils' participation to ensure that nobody misses out.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Loudwater Combined 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 inspector received 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	48	58	48	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	59	48	59	48	3	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	36	69	57	8	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	29	76	62	9	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	36	68	56	6	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	30	72	59	11	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	33	72	59	6	5	2	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)	23	19	74	61	11	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	28	78	64	6	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	16	60	49	21	17	8	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	16	75	61	12	10	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	32	26	74	61	5	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	42	58	48	5	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

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 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Loudwater Combined School, High Wycombe HP11 1JJ

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently and sharing your views with us in conversation and through filling in questionnaires. You told us that you enjoy school and are proud of your new library, which you had a hand in renewing. Loudwater is a satisfactory school. Here are the things we liked best.

- The school makes sure you are safe and cares for you well.
- You behave well and are considerate towards one another.
- You take plenty of exercise and have a good understanding about making healthy choices.
- You help around the school and get involved in your local community.
- You know about different cultures, and mix with children from different backgrounds.
- There are plenty of clubs for you to enjoy.

There are a few things that the school needs to improve.

- We have asked your teachers to help you to do better in mathematics, so that you are confident about tackling new problems.
- We have also asked them to keep you active during lessons, and to make sure you have time to read their comments in your books about how to improve your work.
- We have asked the school's leaders and the governing body to check regularly how things are going so that the school can improve more quickly.

You all can help by working hard and telling your teachers what you enjoy about learning.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

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