

Luton Infant & Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118319
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358311
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Garratt
Headteacher	Sue Lythgoe
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw 17 lessons taught by 12 staff and sampled additional support sessions for individuals. Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, representatives of the governing body and a member of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring, a range of policy documents and records, the minutes of governing body meetings and a range of pupils' work and assessments. They also analysed 58 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and four from staff.

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

- Whether monitoring, evaluation and planning are rigorous enough to raise pupils' attainment.
- How effectively assessment is used to adapt teaching and the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups, particularly in writing.
- The strengths in provision that contribute to apparently good outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How successfully provision meets the needs of pupils who arrive with little or no English in order to improve their attendance and achievement.

Information about the school

This infant school is larger than average for schools of its type and the roll is rising. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average. It has risen significantly in recent years, with a rapidly growing population from Eastern European backgrounds, who often speak very little or no English when they arrive. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. A significantly growing proportion of pupils join the school later than the normal points of entry, currently approximately a third of pupils in Key Stage 1. Many of these have either previously not attended school at all, or had brief experiences of a number of different schools. Around half of all pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is well above average. Pupils' needs link mostly to speech, language and communication, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school's provision has included a nursery since January 2009. The governing body manages a breakfast club.

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

The considerable care for pupils shown by staff at Luton Infant and Nursery School has a striking impact on securing good achievement, particularly for the large proportion of pupils whose contexts may make them potentially vulnerable. The school works proactively with parents and carers to help break down possible barriers that might prevent pupils making the most of what the school has to offer. One parent referred to the communication between home and school by describing how staff 'always make a special effort', an approach taken across all aspects of the school's work. A culture of high expectation about the capabilities of both staff and pupils alike underpins the school's good capacity to improve. For example, the school has plans to use strong links with a network of other schools to enable its teachers to develop their skills by observing outstanding practice elsewhere. Leaders use rigorous monitoring systems to check frequently whether pupils are doing well enough and respond quickly to address any potential underachievement. This has resulted in an improving trend in rates of progress. The leaders have a detailed and accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and use this information to create effective plans to target areas requiring improvement. The governing body provides the school's leaders with a good level of challenge and support. Consequently, the school has successfully sustained and developed its good-quality teaching, curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage.

Attainment is low at the end of Year 2 because a considerable proportion of pupils join the school after the normal points of entry with exceptionally low skills. Although their rates of progress are good and improving, there is not sufficient time to raise their attainment to average levels. Despite this, pupils' achievement is good because all groups make at least consistently good progress, and those who join the school at the start of Reception, and remain throughout, make outstanding progress. The broadly average levels currently seen across all pupils in Year 1 and Reception provide convincing evidence of a strong and sustained rise in attainment across the school. Strategies to promote literacy skills, including a strong focus on developing vocabulary, learning of letter sounds, and a highly structured programme of additional reading interventions, have significantly accelerated rates of progress in reading and writing.

Teachers' use of assessment information to ensure that activities and work match the needs of different groups is a significant strength. While taking good account of pupils' often low starting points, lessons successfully target work as closely as possible to age-appropriate levels, supporting the drive to raise attainment. Children get off to a good start in Nursery with an effective balance of short, adult-led sessions and plenty of opportunity to learn through self-chosen activities. However, across the rest of the school, adults direct too much of some lessons. This limits opportunities for pupils to work independently and develop problem-solving skills to promote even greater achievement.

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Good-quality support from the skilled team of teaching assistants helps ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included and achieve well. Pupils who arrive part way through the school with little or no English make good progress through a combined package of learning alongside their peers in class, and additional support as part of a targeted group. The school's evaluations of the impact of this additional class show that it has improved attitudes and attendance. Although still low, overall attendance is rising rapidly and the number of pupils that are persistently absent has fallen significantly. The school's thorough breakdown and analysis of attendance patterns shows that there is some variation in the rate of improvement between different groups. The school recognises it can do more with this data to target specific groups, including its efforts to raise awareness with parents and carers of the importance of regular attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment so that those leaving Year 2 in 2012 and beyond are at least broadly in line with national averages by:
 - reducing the amount of time in lessons in Reception to Year 2 that pupils are directed by an adult to promote better achievement, independence and problem solving
 - implementing plans to improve the quality of teaching so that much is outstanding through the use of strong links with other schools to enable teachers to learn from best practice elsewhere.
- Raise levels of attendance to at least average by:
 - using the school's detailed monitoring and tracking of attendance to set targets and give encouragement and support for specific groups
 - refining efforts to engage with particular groups of parents and carers to emphasise the importance of regular attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Overall, pupils start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. In the 2010 end-of-Key-Stage-1 assessments, pupils who had been at Luton Infants since the start of Reception, who were the large majority, attained above-average levels. The corresponding group in the current Year 2 have made outstanding progress to be on track to attain broadly average levels. Despite this, the numbers who join the school late and attain the lowest levels, even with their good and improving rates of progress, mean that overall attainment is set to remain low this year.

Broadly average attainment seen in lessons and pupils' work across the rest of the school provides clear evidence of the strongly improving trend. Prominent displays of writing throughout the school celebrate pupils' achievements. Most are well motivated to practise and improve their skills. In an English lesson in Year 2, pupils achieved well, writing diary entries about an heroic boat rescue in the imagined role of Grace Darling. Stimulated by the role-play activity at the beginning and end of the lesson, pupils were transfixed when one pupil dressed up and went through the 'magic hoop' to answer questions in the assumed role of Grace. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieved well because the subject matter inspired them. In addition, effective support from the

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teaching assistant gave them the right prompts, guidance and encouragement to develop their skills, but allowed them enough independence to sustain their own good pace of work. In another writing lesson, different groups made good progress because they understood well what their own next steps were to improve their writing. In the nurturing environment of the additional class for those at the earliest stages of learning English, pupils develop confidence, language and personal skills well. A strong focus on key vocabulary, including during less formal sessions, supports their good progress. Pupils are supportive of each other in helping to translate and explain where necessary.

Pupils' consistently good and sometimes outstanding behaviour in lessons makes a strong contribution to their good achievement. Positive conduct reflects pupils' good understanding of right and wrong. Although some playtime behaviour is a little boisterous, pupils from different backgrounds mix well and say they feel safe in school. Pupils develop good habits relating to healthy lifestyles, and take-up rates of the healthy free school meals currently offered to all pupils are high. The school's allotment not only develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of growing vegetables, but also provides a good link with the local community. Pupils understand well the qualities required to carry out specific roles, including those proudly wearing their 'Helping Hands' badges. Enthusiastic participation in cultural opportunities, including music making and art, underpin their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In an assembly, the whole school community joined in the enthusiastic and tuneful singing of complex part songs, contrasting with the stillness and peace created afterwards to give chance for personal reflection. Pupils do not give up even when tasks are challenging, one of their 'Golden Rules'. However, they do not always have opportunities to use this to best effect with enough time to work independently or collaboratively on open-ended tasks. That said, pupils' well-developed personal and social skills, improving attendance, good progress and understanding of their next steps, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and beyond.

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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	4
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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?

The broad and balanced curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development well. Changes to the curriculum to make it more flexible have allowed teachers to use assessment information well to plan tasks and activities that provide appropriate challenge for the whole class and different groups within it. Pupils are beginning to learn how to review and improve their own work. Marking accurately assesses pupils' work and shows them how well they have done, although it does not consistently show pupils how to improve. Teachers' questioning skills are good and the teachers find effective ways to engage pupils in whole-class parts of the lesson, although there is sometimes a tendency for these to last too long because teachers have planned to include too much. High expectations in lessons motivate pupils and support their good achievement. In a mathematics lesson in Year 1, pupils were enthused by the 'challenge' envelope in the middle of the table that they could open once they felt confident enough in their subtraction tasks. In a guided-reading session in Year 2, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities developed a deeper understanding of the story because the teaching assistant asked appropriately challenging questions and encouraged them to develop and extend their answers.

All adults know pupils in their care extremely well as individuals. This secures the successful inclusion and well-targeted support for pupils whose contexts may make them potentially vulnerable, including those who speak little or no English. The school can point

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to numerous and striking examples where potential barriers to the achievement or well-being of individual pupils have been broken down. As the headteacher said, 'I am so proud of my staff they are always willing to go the extra mile.' Pupils who attend the breakfast club get their day off to a positive and healthy start, including cleaning their teeth after breakfast. A broad range of rigorous and effective strategies to both promote attendance and directly tackle absence are starting to have a significant impact on raising low attendance levels.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has created a strong team and common sense of purpose at all levels. Plans for improvement correctly identify priorities and include challenging targets, although these are not always sharp and specific enough to make the measuring of success straightforward. A committed, experienced and stable governing body focuses strongly on the impact of decisions on improving outcomes for pupils. It maintains a thorough knowledge of the school's effectiveness through regular monitoring visits to the school and the detailed reports that leaders provide. Leaders meet with staff to carry out extensive analysis and evaluation of the progress made by individuals and groups six times a year. They ensure that staff use this information to respond rapidly to any potential underachievement by adapting provision. Gaps between different groups are closing. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and there are no recorded racist incidents.

The school is proactive in building effective partnerships with other agencies and professionals to support and promote pupils' well-being. Particularly strong links exist to improve outcomes, including attendance, for pupils whose contexts may make them potentially vulnerable. Effective and robust safeguarding procedures are well established. A thorough training programme ensures that staff are vigilant and fully understand their safeguarding roles. The multilingual teaching assistant provides invaluable support, communicating with parents and carers who have little or no English. The school's community cohesion audit and evaluation accurately reflect strengths and development needs in this area and takes good account of the changing community and context in which the school works. The successful integration of the significant numbers of pupils who arrive after the normal points of entry secures the cohesive school community. Year 2 pupils have exchanged emails with a school in Yorkshire, but the school has plans to develop its national links further. Taking outcomes for pupils into account, the school provides good value for money.

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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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Early Years Foundation Stage are happy and confident to engage in school, reflecting their feelings of safety. They enjoy good relationships with adults and mix well. Children start to develop good habits towards adopting healthy lifestyles through eating healthy snacks and learning important routines such as regular hand washing. They behave well and begin to develop independence by selecting activities and through making choices in their learning during focus tasks, such as choosing how to write the 'number sentences' they are trying to solve. Regular speaking and listening opportunities, a structured approach to teaching letter sounds, and strong focus on key vocabulary, are supporting children's communication, language and literacy development effectively. For example, children in Nursery were developing their speech and language skills well, engaging in the role play 'Baby Clinic', while in Reception, children applied their knowledge of letter sounds to sort unfamiliar real words and nonsense words.

Children make good progress across all areas of learning. Well-established and robust assessment systems ensure that careful observations of children's learning and development guide planning for their next steps. Adults keep children actively involved when leading group sessions and in Nursery these are short and focused. Teachers match small-group tasks well to individual needs in Reception classes. Careful deployment of resources and adults provides effective support for children and enables them to make good gains in their learning. Adults assess children's responses during tasks, varying and reshaping the activities to ensure they have the right level of challenge to promote good achievement. Sometimes adult-directed sessions in Reception last too long, particularly for some children's stage of development, which limits opportunities to learn through self-chosen activities both indoors and out. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader thoroughly analyses children's progress and leads the team in the successful use of this to

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improve provision. The gap between the school's results and the national figures at the end of Reception is decreasing.

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 below average proportion of parents and carers completed the inspection questionnaire. Those that answered each question were unanimous in their view that overall their children enjoy school, that teaching is good and their children are making enough progress, and that the school helps children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and prepares them well for the future. The overwhelming majority expressed positive views about most aspects of the school's work. A very small minority disagreed that the school keeps their children safe, while half of parents and carers strongly agreed with this statement. Inspectors found that the school has effective safeguarding systems and provides good-quality care, guidance and support for its pupils. Consequently, the extent to which pupils feel safe is good.

A few questionnaires also contained additional comments, which were mostly positive. There were no common areas of concern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Luton Infant and Nursery 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 224 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	60	21	36	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	50	24	41	4	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	66	18	31	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	59	22	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	67	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	67	18	31	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	52	25	43	0	0	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)	27	47	26	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	47	28	48	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	48	26	45	2	3	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	47	28	48	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	60	21	36	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	64	17	29	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 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Luton Infant and Nursery School, Chatham, ME4 5AP

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and we are very grateful to you for helping us to find out all about your school. You told us that you enjoy school and we can see why it is a good school. There were a number of things we particularly liked.

- All adults in school care for you well.
- The school has good links with your parents and carers.
- You behave well in lessons.
- You are making good, and sometimes exceptional, progress and developing good personal skills and qualities.
- Teaching is good and your teachers make sure you all have tasks and activities that are not too easy and not too hard.
- Teaching assistants support a number of you well to help you make as much progress as others in the class.
- Those of you who did not speak much English when you started school are doing well.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are doing well.

Your headteacher and others responsible for running the school have good plans to make it even better. To help with this, we have asked them to make sure you can achieve even more by giving you more chances to work by yourself or together on tasks where you have to think and make your own decisions. We have also asked them to carry out their plans to let teachers get good ideas about how to make lessons even better by watching teachers in other schools. Finally, we would like them to work with some of your parents and carers to make sure you attend school on as many days as possible.

You can all help by continuing to behave well and always trying your very hardest, particularly when set a task to do without support from an adult, and by coming to school as often as you can.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn

Lead inspector

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