

# Linden Grove Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	118586
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379648
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Brian Netto

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>	423
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Winch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Keith Simmons
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Stanhope Road Ashford Kent TN23 5RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 621133
<b>Fax number</b>	01233 634828
<b>Email address</b>	Headteacher@linden-grove.kent.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	20–21 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379648



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Netto Additional inspector

Rosalind Ferrara Additional inspector

Carol Vant Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 19 lessons or part-lessons, taught by 19 teachers. Of these lessons, four were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, other staff, members of the governing body and different groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading preferences. Inspectors also looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and pupils' work. They analysed 63 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, those completed by a sample of pupils in Key Stage 2 and 26 completed by staff.

## Information about the school

Linden Grove is larger than the average-sized primary school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is around the national average. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than average. More pupils than average join or leave the school at other than the usual times. The school does not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The previous inspection in February 2009 judged the school's overall effectiveness to be satisfactory and removed a notice to improve issued in November 2007. Since then, the school has applied for academy status to become part of an all-through 3 to 18 school. The school runs a breakfast club. It has received a number of awards, including the Healthy School status.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- The school’s overall effectiveness is inadequate. It is not satisfactory because of weaknesses in pupils’ achievement, teaching and leadership and management. The slow progress of many pupils in English and mathematics means that they do not achieve well enough and their attainment is too low by the time they leave the school. Leaders and managers have not secured the necessary improvements required to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning.
- Although some effective teaching was seen, teaching over time is inadequate because it has not enabled pupils to achieve sufficiently well. Teachers do not ensure that the teaching of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) matches the needs of the pupils, and sometimes teaching does not actively engage pupils in their learning. As a result pupils’ progress overall is too slow.
- Good progress is evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that from their low starting points, children’s attainment by the end of the Reception Year is broadly in line with age-related expectations in most of the areas of learning. Good teaching and the imaginative provision ensure that children settle quickly into school life, and begin to learn basic skills well.
- Pupils’ behaviour is satisfactory, and they feel safe and secure. Parents and carers agree that their children are kept safe in school. Although the school is reducing the proportion of those pupils who are persistently absent, attendance remains below the national average.
- Leadership and management are inadequate because the pace of improvement has been too slow. Leaders recognise that the school’s provision and outcomes

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for pupils are not good enough. Consequently, they are starting to use performance management to help improve the quality of teaching and to target further improvements. However, while appropriate plans have been introduced, and the school has begun to tackle the weaknesses, these actions are recent and are not yet having enough impact on improving pupils' progress.

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress so that their achievement is at least in line with what is expected for their age by:
  - providing daily systematic teaching of early reading skills to all pupils who need it
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in different contexts
  - making sure teachers' marking clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement and pupils have time to respond to the feedback they receive.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils by:
  - improving the pace of lessons so that all pupils are actively engaged and involved in their learning at all times
  - teaching language and communication skills more explicitly and providing more opportunities for speaking and listening, so that all pupils are equipped with the skills to make better progress
  - ensuring that the best practice in teaching is systematically shared across the school.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more robustly and frequently in order to ensure all groups of pupils make accelerated progress.
- In partnership with parents and carers, raise attendance to at least the national average by:
  - reducing the extended absences of the small proportion of pupils whose attendance falls below the national average
  - building on current strategies to target pupils whose absence falls below the national average.

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## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Achievement is inadequate because pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make inadequate progress in English and mathematics. By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment in all subjects, including reading, is significantly below average. This is despite the good start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children make good progress from entry levels which are well below those typical for their age. Effective teaching and good provision contribute towards children's good progress in this part of the school. A wide range of interesting activities across all areas of learning helps children to develop independence and supports their perseverance when undertaking tasks.

Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires are, in the main, satisfied with the progress their children make. Inspectors found that for many of the pupils underachievement in both English and mathematics has built up over time without being tackled adequately. The achievement of pupils who arrive at times other than at the start of the academic year is particularly low, reflecting in part their very low skills on entry to the school. Despite some recent improvement, the progress being made by these pupils remains insufficient.

Where learning is best, pupils respond with interest to tasks that are well matched to their abilities, and which provide them with opportunities to make choices and work independently. In lessons where such activities take place, pupils also benefit from the skilled support of teaching assistants. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs occasionally make satisfactory progress as a result of well-targeted support programmes. However, the inconsistency of the quality of this support means that their progress is not accelerated sufficiently. Some pupils respond well to the school's assertive mentoring system which enables them to understand how well they are doing and to take steps to improve their work using specific guidance from teachers.

### Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is inadequate. Although there have been recent improvements to teaching and much of the teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory, these improvements have not yet had sufficient impact on accelerating pupils' progress and raising their attainment. Inadequate teaching over time has meant that pupils have made insufficient progress from their starting points and it has also failed to eradicate previous underachievement. Parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching provided but inspection evidence does not support this view.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 1 remains weak. Pupils do not make enough gains in their reading or writing because phonics is not taught

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systematically across the school. Sometimes teachers talk for too long, so that most pupils become disengaged and time is wasted. For example, a Year 3 lesson was directed too much by the teacher, reducing the time pupils had to discuss and apply their learning as well as improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils' books in Key Stage 2 confirm the inconsistencies in teaching and marking. Good practice in the detailed marking and setting of targets in English in Years 5 and 6 is not consistent across the school. In the best practice seen, pupils are provided with specific targets for improvement and detailed feedback on what they have achieved. As a result, pupils are able to improve their work and make more rapid progress.

The teaching of accurate mathematical language is not sufficiently explicit, and opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in different contexts are variable. In addition, there are insufficient opportunities for mathematical investigation and problem solving activities. Too much time is spent repeating basic calculations which do not always extend pupils' learning. As one pupil in a Year 5 and 6 lesson commented when working on time measurements, 'We've been doing it for a long time.' Similarly, work is not always matched well enough to learners' needs.

Learning is more effective when the focus is relevant to the pupils. For example, the teacher's use of newspapers in a Year 5 and 6 lesson helped to engage pupils' attention on current affairs resulting in good progress in improving their writing and listening skills. Effective modelling of language and challenging of misconceptions by the teacher helped pupils in Year 4 to explain confidently how to solve number problems involving the use of money. However across the school insufficient focus on the use of accurate mathematical language means that most pupils struggle with basic concepts. The curriculum provides limited opportunities for pupils to apply their language and number skills in unfamiliar contexts.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately. For example pupils in Year 2 explored abstract art through the work of Georgia O'Keefe and as a result of effective modelling and well-directed questioning by the teacher, most were able to demonstrate a good understanding of this style. Pupils were fascinated by the flowers they used which inspired their creativity.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils are polite and respectful in lessons and around the school, and are courteous to visitors. Parents and carers agree that the school is orderly and calm. When asked if behaviour was typically like that seen during the inspection, pupils indicated that sometimes poor behaviour interrupted learning. However, pupils agreed that there were very few instances of bullying and when this did occur adults resolved matters very quickly. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own behaviour through the assertive mentoring programme, which helps them to manage their own behaviour effectively. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mixed. When lessons are engaging they respond well; when lessons fail to capture their imagination pupils show a low level of interest and become disengaged from their work.

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Most pupils said they feel safe, and the parents and carers who responded to the survey agreed that their children are kept safe. Pupils attribute this to the good relationships they have with adults and each other. They understand 'stranger danger' and also the dangers involved when using the internet. Support and guidance are strong for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Effective liaison with specialist agencies has in some cases resulted in improved levels of attendance for individual pupils. Attendance has been below average over the last few years, and although the school employs a range of strategies to reverse this trend and is tackling persistent absences more rigorously, low rates of attendance continue. This is partly due to the extended holidays taken by some families during term time.

### **Leadership and management**

Despite some limited evidence of improvements to the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of leaders and managers is inadequate overall. Consequently, levels of pupils' achievement since the previous inspection have not improved enough. Better teaching is not yet leading to sufficiently improved outcomes for pupils. The current strategies and approaches for improving teaching and learning are not sharp enough to demonstrate adequate capacity for improvement.

Professional development and support from the local authority have included coaching and mentoring for teaching as well as regular lesson observations and feedback to teachers. A more focused programme of lesson observations means that senior leaders are better able to hold teachers to account for pupils' performance. The impact has been seen particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there have been rapid improvements in provision and outcomes for the children over time. The improvement in teaching in this area was confirmed during the inspection. However the school is not yet demonstrating a trend of sustained improvement in either teaching or pupils' achievement. At present the school lacks a sharp focus on using information from the monitoring of teaching across the school to improve the quality of teaching for example through sharing best practice.

Staff are generally supportive of the school but the uncertain circumstances of its future academy status have left many feeling vulnerable and unsettled. The governing body does not play its full part in ensuring and measuring the school's success. However, it fulfils its duty to ensure that health and safety matters are dealt with effectively and that the requirements for safeguarding children are met. Effective partnerships with parents and carers are demonstrated in the school's positive response to parental requests for flexible timings of sessions in the Nursery.

Attainment gaps between different groups of pupils are closing but not yet at a sufficiently speedy rate and attainment levels overall remain too low. While the school is effective in preventing most forms of discrimination, it is not ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities because of their underachievement.

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The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, with a specific focus on English and mathematics. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequately promoted through the curriculum, the after-school clubs and the opportunities for visits and performances, including singing and plays.

## 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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Linden Grove Primary School, Ashford, TN23 5RN**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed hearing from you what you like about your school. We were pleased to see how respectful and courteous you are to visitors. We agree that there have been some changes for the better recently and that you are now beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics because the teaching is improving.

However, we found that, although there are things that you can be proud of in your school it is not providing you with a satisfactory education. Your school requires special measures because staff need additional support to help the school improve more quickly. Inspectors will visit regularly to check on the progress the school is making.

In order to make the necessary improvements, we have asked those responsible for leading and managing the school to check on the progress you are making more often. We have also asked the adults at your school to do the following things:

- make sure that more of you make faster progress in English and mathematics
- make sure that the teaching consistently involves you in the lessons and helps you to improve your language and communication skills, especially speaking and listening
- ensure that all your teachers regularly check your progress so that they can help you to learn more quickly
- make sure that you all attend school regularly.

You can all help by continuing to behave well and by coming to school every day. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto  
Lead inspector

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