

Longtown Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116705
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338873
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Kerr

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	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kym Wilcocks
Headteacher	Sian McGrath
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by one additional inspector. Six lessons were observed and four teachers were seen teaching. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at school policies, monitoring files, records of pupils' progress and 40 parental questionnaires as well as questionnaires from staff and pupils. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, governors, and staff.

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

- learning and progress in lessons and over the past year
- the impact of the school's new leadership.

Information about the school

This small school serves the village of Longtown and the surrounding, largely hill farming community. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. A below-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is part of a local extended schools project and shares its outdoor learning facilities with an independently-managed nursery on site. It has recently been awarded the Gold Arts Mark. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

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

This is a good school which has improved significantly since the last inspection under the strong leadership of the new headteacher. Pupils now make good rather than satisfactory progress throughout the school and achieve well to reach above-average standards by the end of Year 6. Progress is particularly rapid in English in Key Stage 2, but is not as fast in mathematics, and this has rightly been identified by the school as a key area for improvement. The content of pupils' writing is a strong feature, showing very effective vocabulary and grammar, but standards of punctuation in written work and standards of spoken English in lessons sometimes lag behind. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well and also make good progress in their personal development. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because staff strike a good balance between supporting them to learn through play and including them appropriately in class lessons. Pupils behave exceptionally well, feel very safe and take full advantage of the many opportunities they have to keep fit and healthy through regular exercise and eating well.

Teaching is good. Teachers plan well for the wide age range in each class. They mark work thoroughly in most respects and they often include pointers for improvement, especially in the content of writing. Relationships are excellent so pupils feel secure and are willing to suggest ideas and volunteer answers. Occasionally opportunities are missed to provide better challenge or support for individuals, for example by refocusing tasks during a lesson, setting a challenging problem or suggesting an extra task while marking. English is used and developed well in other subjects, but the use of mathematical vocabulary and skills is less evident across the curriculum. Pupils appreciate the expanded range of enjoyable learning opportunities that the curriculum now provides. As one pupil put it: 'with the new headteacher there is more to lessons than just sitting in the classroom'.

Excellent use is made of a wide range of partners, including parents, to enhance provision. The development of the garden and woodland areas are models of good practice in this sphere. The headteacher has identified the need to plan more carefully for skill development in a range of subjects in order to move towards an outstanding curriculum. The school looks after its pupils well and provides good educational guidance. Governors have a good working knowledge of the school and play their part in setting challenging targets for improvement. Governors and staff share the headteacher's vision for the school and her determination to achieve excellence. The school's accurate self-evaluation and recent strong track record demonstrate that it has a good capacity to continue improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring pupils' progress in mathematics closer to that in English by:

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- planning investigations and problem-solving activities for pupils of all abilities
- ensuring that teachers assess pupils' understanding during lessons and adjust the tasks accordingly
- using marking to provide extra challenge for more-able pupils and to help lower attaining pupils to consolidate basic skills
- extending the use of mathematical skills and vocabulary in other subjects.
- Improve pupils' punctuation and speaking skills by:
 - raising expectations for the quality of punctuation in pupils' writing and using marking more effectively to show pupils how to improve it
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their speaking skills during lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

All groups of pupils make good progress in both key stages. Attainment varies greatly from year to year because of the effect of individual abilities in such small cohorts but is broadly above average by Year 6. Current Year 6 pupils have made exceptional progress in English during Key Stage 2 and most have achieved level 5, which is above what is expected nationally at this age. However, progress in mathematics has been slower. Progress in lessons is now good in mathematics, but still not as good as in English. The pupils' written work in various subjects shows increasing sophistication in choice of vocabulary and ability to adapt style and content to the potential reader. The development of pupils' mathematical vocabulary and their use of mathematical skills in other subjects are more limited. Progress is good in some other subjects, including art and physical education, because of good specialist support, and pupils have good information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Progress in skills in other subjects such as science and design and technology is inconsistent.

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are happy and confident learners. They work together well in lessons and show they can reflect on ideas. They appreciate the beauty of their surroundings and the benefits of their way of life. They have a strong sense of community and participate actively in promoting the area as a tourist destination through their contribution to a local guidebook. They also enjoy comparing their own school and surroundings with those of pupils in different settings in the United Kingdom and Africa. The school's average attendance returns are disproportionately affected by unavoidable individual absences and do not reflect reluctance on the part of any pupils to come to school.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection because expectations have been raised and teachers have been encouraged and supported to make lessons more varied and interesting, especially by using the outdoor environment. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well to address the needs of all the pupils across the wide range of ages and ability in each class. Assessment is used well to set challenging individual targets for most pupils, especially in English where they are referred to across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well to achieve individual targets. Planned tasks are often effective, but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to refine challenge by assessing how well pupils are understanding during the lesson and altering tasks. For example, the most able are occasionally included in mathematics tasks that are too easy for them when they could be using their skills to investigate and solve problems independently. Underlying misunderstandings that hold back some lower-attaining pupils in mathematics are occasionally overlooked because of too close a focus on the completion of the set tasks.

The afternoon curriculum activities are varied and interesting and include good opportunities for pupils to take part in the arts and also to develop practical life skills and develop interests, for example in gardening, sport, observational drawing and the study of wild-life. However, these lessons are not always sufficiently focused on the systematic development of skills, for example in experimental science. Outside agencies and partners

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are used exceptionally well to provide input that is beyond the school's resources. Partnerships with the local Outdoor Education Centre and sports providers, for example, have greatly enhanced pupils' interest and involvement in physical exercise, contributing to outstanding outcomes in this area. The school's policies and procedures encourage good attendance and behaviour and help to ensure a safe environment for pupils. Transition arrangements are good into the school, between key stages and on transfer to secondary education. For example, pupils benefitted from writing poems to express their feelings on moving on to a new school or having friends do so.

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?

Staff, parents, children and governors all strongly express the view that the school has benefitted enormously from the leadership and management provided by the new headteacher. Teachers and teaching assistants contribute confidently to critical self evaluation. As a result, clear, relevant priorities for improvement are identified. The headteacher has set high expectations for the quality of learning in lessons, made wise adjustments to deployment to better utilise staff strengths and given support to teachers to improve where necessary. Governors feel empowered to play a full role in school self-evaluation and in challenging as well as supporting the headteacher to continue raising standards.

The school procedures for safe recruitment of staff and child-protection are very thorough and well documented, and comprehensive risk assessments are regularly undertaken. Equality of opportunity is strongly embedded in the school's ethos and in all its policies and procedures, which are systematically reviewed and updated. There are good procedures ready to record and deal with racist or other discriminatory incidents, though no incidents have been recorded. The school makes a very positive contribution to community cohesion within its locality and is beginning to extend this work to a national and international level. Governors have appropriate plans to further improve this aspect of provision by linking what the school does to more clearly defined aims and objectives in relation to ethnic and religious diversity.

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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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although there are very few children of Reception age within the school at any one time, the provision made for them meets the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements well. The children are encouraged and supported to make their own choices from a good range of well-resourced play activities for much of the time. They make good progress in their areas of learning, especially their personal development and language and communication skills, though progress in their mathematical development is sometimes slower. They enjoy good relationships with the other children and become confident, independent learners. Staff are skilled at judging when to simply observe the children as they play to assess their progress, and when to talk with them to further their learning. Good records of the children's progress show assessments of attainment in each area of learning through photographs and annotated samples of work. The school makes good use of its links with the on-site pre-school to provide an extended social group for outdoor play and to smooth transition into reception. The outdoor learning area is an integral part of the classroom, adding to the children's enjoyment. The good range and quality of play equipment enhances physical and creative development particularly well. Good use of the extensive grounds furthers the children's knowledge and understanding of the natural world and their mathematical development is enhanced through the opportunities they have to work alongside the older pupils in some lessons. The staff work well together to manage the setting as a team and they keep parents fully informed about their children's progress.

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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 return rate for parental questionnaires was exceptionally high and the views expressed exceptionally positive. A high proportion of returns included complimentary written comments. Many parents and carers wrote to say what a positive impact the new headteacher had made, especially to the range and quality of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. Other aspects praised included the staff's accessibility, the extent to which the children enjoy school, the way the school is at the heart of the local community and the quality of its partnership with parents and carers. Individual concerns were expressed about the speed of traffic past the school, the quality of supervision at playtime and the hygiene arrangements in the children's toilets. The school is aware of the speed problem and is considering how to involve the pupils in lobbying for traffic-calming measures. The quality of playtime supervision observed during the inspection was good and comprehensive records of incidents were scrutinised. The school takes appropriate action to maintain good hygiene standards in the toilet areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Longtown Community 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	85	5	13	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	75	9	23	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	80	8	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	78	9	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	73	9	23	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	75	10	25	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)	32	80	6	15	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	78	6	15	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	73	9	23	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	83	5	13	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	85	4	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	88	4	10	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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Longtown Community Primary School, Hereford, HR2 0LE

It was a pleasure to visit your school and to see how hard you work and how much you enjoy all the activities you do. Yours is a good school. It helps you to do well, and keep fit and healthy. You told us you feel very safe. You are well-prepared for secondary school by the time you leave and have learned some good skills that will help you find jobs after school. You are good at writing. You use interesting words and sentences to express your thoughts and feelings. You are also good at mathematics, but it is not quite as good as your work in English. Your teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team to make your lessons interesting as well as useful and they keep in close touch with your parents so that they can also help you with your learning at home. Your headteacher has done a good job in improving your school over the past year and together with the staff and governors has put together good plans to make it even better. I have asked the teachers to concentrate on the following things.

To give you more problems and investigations to tackle in mathematics, and make sure the work is exactly right for you, either by changing it during lessons or by helping you through marking. Also, to make sure you get plenty of opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects.

To help you to get even better at English by showing you how to improve your punctuation and speaking skills

You can help by putting forward your own ideas and by simply doing your best all the time!

Yours sincerely

Peter Kerr

Lead inspector

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