



Layston Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117390
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280063
Inspection dates 18 May 2006 to 19 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Jackie Cousins LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Causeway
School category	Voluntary controlled		SG9 9EU
Age range of pupils	5 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01763 271235
Number on roll	142	Fax number	01763 274890
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. John Froggett
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Jane Sherwood

Age group 5 to 9	Inspection dates 18 May 2006 - 19 May 2006	Inspection number 280063
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in Buntingford near Royston. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few are from minority ethnic groups. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are in line with expectations. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to claim free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection agrees with the school's judgement that Layston First is a good school. This is a popular school with a good reputation. It works particularly effectively with parents. One parent said, 'I have nothing but praise for the teachers and staff at Layston. They are diligent and enthusiastic and always have the children's best interest at the forefront of their minds.' Most pupils make effective progress at the school because of good teaching. Children are given a good start in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and so standards are above average by the start of Year 1. Pupils make sound progress in Years 1 and 2 and so standards remain above average. The oldest pupils make good progress and standards are well above average by Year 4. Pupils' behaviour is good and their enjoyment in their work is evident when they talk about all the things they do in school. Interesting projects are used to teach a variety of subjects and make learning fun such as an afternoon where pupils dressed up as Victorians and pretended to be in a school from this era. Assessment activities are used satisfactorily. However, pupil targets and teachers' marking are not always used effectively. The role of subject coordinators is satisfactory but could be more developed which would enable them to have a clearer understanding of the standards and pupils' achievement in each subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. For example, pupils' progress in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly. The school is in a good position to improve in the future because the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and there is an effective school development plan. The school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teachers' marking and their use of targets, so that pupils understand more specifically what their next steps could be and know when they have attained them.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators so that they analyse standards and pupils' progress more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils start at the school their level of knowledge and understanding is in line with levels expected. Pupils make good progress in the Reception class and standards are above those expected by the start of Year 1. Pupils' make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. This is because teachers develop key skills soundly. Challenging targets were met in 2005 and standards were above average in Year 2 assessments, particularly in reading, science and numeracy. Standards of writing are average, this is partly because pupils mainly write rather short pieces of work and rarely complete extended pieces of writing. Most pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress effectively because of good support and the use of effective individual education plans. Pupils from minority ethnic groups

achieve well as a result of good teaching. Standards are well above average in Year 4 in reading, mathematics and science because teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils and support learning in effective ways. More able pupils are well challenged and so more than the expected proportion of pupils attain higher levels. Pupils' standards in writing are above average. In ICT pupils' attainment is in line with expectations, for example when they search the Internet and copy and paste images effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Happy and friendly pupils greet you as you walk around the school. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. This contributes strongly to learning. Pupils work hard in lessons and are learning key skills effectively that will equip them well in their next stage of education and their future working lives. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. The pupils' spiritual development is particularly well developed through assemblies, religious education and literacy topics. For example, one Year 4 pupil wrote a very uplifting blessing about friendship, 'May the light guide you, may you have hope in your soul, may courage rise within you and your heart grow true and strong. Then in the distant future we will meet again, but before we meet next time, may you stand tall and powerful.' Moral development ensures pupils know right from wrong effectively. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They have good social skills and show increasing maturity and growing independence as they move up through the school. Older pupils support younger ones in weekly paired reading sessions and with reading hymns in assemblies. In the wider community, pupils thoughtfully take harvest gifts and Easter cards to the elderly people of Buntingford. Pupils' cultural development is good and they are well aware of our different cultures. Safe and healthy lifestyles are adopted because of good provision in the school. Most pupils eat fruit at break times and enjoy weekly swimming and physical education sessions as well as playtime activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The best teaching has many positive features. These include the use of teaching methods, which make learning memorable. Shared learning intentions mean pupils are clear about what they will be studying in each lesson. Practical activities develop pupils' understanding effectively. Basic skills are taught well and effective planning means that different groups, such as those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress. Teaching assistants are used well to support these pupils but also to extend the learning of more able pupils. When teachers share success criteria with pupils, they can assess their own learning in a

session. However, there is scope for teachers to make more use of this strategy at the end of lessons to develop pupils' self-evaluation skills. In the Foundation Stage and Year 1 opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in less formal ways are sometimes missed. Pupils' attainment is assessed satisfactorily in reading, writing, mathematics and science but it is not yet recorded in a way which makes it easy to evaluate pupils' progress from year to year. Teachers generally use assessment information well to challenge more able pupils. Most mark work constructively and so pupils know what they have done well. However, this is not yet consistently the case. A few teachers do not explain clearly whether pupils have attained their group targets or, if not, how they can be attained and this affects the progress that pupils make in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good curriculum of activities meets the needs of most pupils. Pupils achieve well in developing literacy, numeracy and science skills because an effective programme of work is taught. Resources including the ICT suite are used well to develop pupils' key ICT skills. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements in many subjects including design and technology. A new scheme of work develops pupils' personal, social and health education effectively. Visitors and visits enrich pupils' opportunities effectively to learn about topics. For example, pupils really enjoyed drama sessions and going out into the locality to make sketches. A satisfactory range of lunchtime and after school clubs develops pupils' physical and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are cared for well in a welcoming and positive environment. The school makes all required checks on adults working in the school so that pupils are kept as safe as they can be. The pupils say they feel safe in school and have someone they can go to if they have any concerns. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place. Risk assessments are undertaken for various activities and regular school safety checks are undertaken. The recent investment in small play equipment gives a real purpose to children's activities, particularly at lunch time. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to meet the staff and to receive progress reports. However, pupils are not always clear about the next steps they need to take to meet their personal targets or about when they have attained them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides very effective leadership, which is clearly focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all the pupils. She is very well assisted by

the deputy headteacher. This is a relatively new management team. One parent said, 'I think the new management team are a breath of fresh air and have the school and the children's interests at heart 100%'. The enthusiastic leadership of the school has helped to create a strong and well-motivated team of staff. It is recognised that the role of the coordinator is satisfactory but more thought could be given as to how they can play a larger part in the evaluation of their subject areas and standards. The school has good self-evaluation procedures, which take into account the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. The school improvement plan is shared with everyone and is used effectively throughout the year. Areas for development correctly focus on continuing to raise standards and on improving the use of pupils' targets to ensure that all achieve as well as they can. Effective school self-evaluation has brought about good improvements since the last inspection. For example, pupils' progress in ICT and religious education is considerably better. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to continue to improve in the future. Governors know the school well through their regular visits and reports from many sources. They critically challenge the school as well as giving knowledgeable support. Finances are managed effectively and their impact is checked to ensure that the school achieves good value for money in its spending.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and watch one assembly. You are lucky to go to such a good school. Good things about your school include the fact that: - your behaviour is good and nearly all of you enjoy school - you make good progress in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 4 - your headteacher and deputy headteacher have very good ideas about ways to improve the school - teachers work hard to make lessons interesting - teachers and teaching assistants care for you well - interesting activities are planned to make school life more fun - you help others effectively in school and in your town - you lead healthy and safe lives. I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. I hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are: - improving teachers' marking and use of targets so that you are clearer about how to reach these and know when you have done them well enough to go on to another - develop the ways teachers check your work in all subjects. Keep up the wonderful work at Layston Church of England First School.