



Linden Grove Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118586
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291180
Inspection dates 16–17 November 2006
Reporting inspector Liz Kounnou

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Stanhope Road |
| School category | Community | | Ashford |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | TN23 5RN |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01233 621133 |
| Number on roll (school) | 428 | Fax number | 01233 634828 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Lisa Carr |
| | | Headteacher | Richard James |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 February 2001 | | |

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| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 3–11 | 16–17 November 2006 | 291180 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves an area of significant deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than average at around 40%. Many more pupils than average (about one in every four) have learning difficulties and disabilities. Some of these are educated in the school's speech and language unit, which currently caters for twenty-two pupils. The proportion of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language is growing but is not significantly higher than average. There has been a very high number of staff changes over a sustained period.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In the years since the last inspection, standards have remained very low in English, mathematics and science and pupils have not done nearly as well as they should. The very high number of staff changes has hampered the school's improvement. Leadership and management are still not effective. The monitoring of pupils' progress through the school is not sufficiently rigorous. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to ensure that pupils know how to make the next steps in learning. Some recent developments are beginning to improve matters but they are not being implemented consistently across the school. As a result, the curriculum does not provide enough challenge for most pupils.

From Year 1 to Year 6, pupils are underachieving, including those who have learning difficulties. Pupils of all abilities are not developing adequate skills for their future life. Teaching and learning are inadequate, except in Year 6, because lessons are undemanding. In the speech and language unit, pupils who have specific learning difficulties are challenged really well and make good progress.

In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well because the quality of education provided for them is good. They thoroughly enjoy the stimulating activities and most reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the Reception year, despite the low standards that are evident when most start school. This good start is not maintained when children move into Year 1, when they soon start to fall behind.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. School leaders have been successful in improving pupils' behaviour, which is now good all around the school. The school council and house captains are confident and play a significant part in the school community. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of lessons are satisfactory. They have an appropriate understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep themselves safe. These have all been high priorities for the school.

Pupils are not given enough guidance and support to help them achieve better standards. Pastoral care is good and many parents commented about this. One wrote, 'I am very happy with this school. All the children are safe and secure and the teachers truly care'.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI 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 in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6, by ensuring that teachers have well informed, realistically high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

- Ensure that rigorous checks are regularly made of the progress that all groups of pupils make in each class, so that underachievement is identified and tackled at an early stage.
- Ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to reach the next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage where they achieve well because the activities are fun. In the rest of the school, standards have been exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. Pupils have very poor reading and writing skills and this hampers their progress all across the curriculum. In mathematics, pupils' lack of basic skills hinders their work. Underachievement is widespread for all groups of pupils and has continued unchecked for several years. Pupils make better progress in Year 6, where teaching is good, but still do not make up the ground lost in earlier years. Pupils underachieve because information from assessments is not used effectively to ensure they make the next steps for learning from week to week, and year to year. Targets set for them are not sufficiently challenging. Those who have learning difficulties are not provided with clear enough guidance to help them make better progress. The exception is the small group of pupils in the speech and language unit who make really good progress owing to the diligent tracking of their achievements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' behave well all around the school and most parents believe this is due to the very good relationships that staff have with pupils. ' I am always amazed at the politeness of the children,' wrote one.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and enjoyment of lessons are satisfactory. Whilst they behave well, they are not always interested in the work, which often lacks challenge. They are not developing the key skills for life well enough. Overall, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils eat healthily in school and drink plenty of water. Many pupils comment that bullying is no longer an issue in school, and at break times they play safely with one another. House captains are proud of the speeches they made to win the house elections. Attendance is well below the national average. It remains a persistent weakness, because parents have not supported the school's good efforts to improve it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well, teaching and learning are inadequate because lessons are not pitched at the right level to allow all groups of pupils to reach their potential. The major weakness is that teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan activities that will help each group of pupils to progress. Most teachers expect too little of pupils and provide too little for them to do. In Year 6 teaching is good because it is livelier and pitched appropriately. Marking, across the school, gives pupils insufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is much better and consequently children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress and have a lot of fun.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate because it lacks challenge and is not adapted well enough to help pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 gain basic skills, particularly in English. Too many activities lack opportunities for pupils to develop key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT at the right level. The speech and language unit provides a sharp contrast and ensures that pupils who have specific learning difficulties steadily gain basic skills. Pupils who have learning difficulties are not served well in the main school because activities do not match their needs well enough. In the Foundation Stage, good attention to planning exciting and well-focused small group work lies behind children's success.

There are good opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences, particularly in sport. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were enthralled by a workshop on Romeo and Juliet presented by the Young Shakespeare Company.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The school is proud of the good pastoral care it provides for pupils and this lies behind the strong support that parents give to the school. Parents comment that their children are happy and give many examples of the way the school works to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Procedures to ensure children's safety are robust and those to improve attendance are used as a model of good practice in the local authority. Rigorous action, including fines, has been taken to try stamp out persistent absence but, so far, this has had little effect.

The guidance and support provided to help pupils' learning are not good enough. Weak procedures for target-setting result in low expectations from Year 1 to Year 6. Pupils do not know their targets for learning or how to reach them. Currently, the

school identifies many pupils who are underachieving as having learning difficulties. This lack of accurate assessment hinders pupils' progress and reduces the amount of support that is available for those who do have particular needs. In the speech and language unit, support and guidance for pupils who have specific learning difficulties are especially good and highly valued by the parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are not effective and underachievement is not being tackled adequately. Since the last inspection, school leaders have concentrated on improving pupils' behaviour and widening their experiences. This has won the support of almost all parents, who overwhelmingly praise the school. Parents are confident that, whilst in school, their children will be safe from oppressive behaviour. There has been a very high turnover of staff and it has not been easy to recruit experienced senior teachers. The newly appointed team of middle managers show a determination to raise standards but lack the experience to do this. The school does not have the capacity to bring about the rapid improvements that are needed. Systems for checking the school's effectiveness are not rigorous. They do not provide a clear picture of how well pupils are doing as they move through the school or an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and learning. Although the priorities identified in the school's self evaluation are appropriate, the school's assessment of its effectiveness is inaccurate. Governors support the school well but have not done enough in the past to challenge poor performance. Overall, governance is satisfactory.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 4 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 4 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 4 |

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 4 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 4 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | Yes |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work. The school is not helping you to make as much progress as you could and we are recommending that it has extra support over the next year.

- Here are the things that we think are best about your school
- You all behave well and are very polite in lessons and around the school.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a lot of fun and learn really well.
- Pupils in the speech and language unit make good progress and their parents are very happy with the school.
- All the adults in the school look after you really well and you feel safe. These are the things that we think could be better
- You are not making enough progress, especially in English and mathematics lessons. This is usually because lessons are not planned in ways that help you improve. Some children are asked to do things that are too difficult and, for others, the work is too easy.
- The teachers and governors are not checking how you are doing carefully enough. This means it takes too long to put things right.
- It would be helpful if you each had a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.

We have asked the school to improve the things that need to be better as quickly as possible. Your teachers will have help to make the improvements and more inspectors will be visiting you regularly to check on how well the school is making progress.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.