



Long Sutton CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123835
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292809
Inspection date 23 January 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Long Sutton
School category	Voluntary aided		Langport
Age range of pupils	4-11		TA10 9NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01458 241434
Number on roll (school)	104	Fax number	01458 241272
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Judy Turner
		Headteacher	Carol Ledger
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. Following a steady decline the number of pupils attending the school has risen again during the last year. Most pupils are taught in classes with two year groups. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds within several small rural communities. Almost all are White British. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and with statements of special educational need are broadly the same as those found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many strengths and few areas in need of development. The headteacher successfully ensures a balance between pupils' personal development and their academic achievement. This results in above- average standards and good personal development and well-being.

The attainment of children on entry to the school varies considerably, and from one year to the next, but it is usually in line with that found nationally for this age group. Pupils achieve well in the Reception Year and also in Years 1 to 6. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Girls achieve particularly well but not all boys are moving on quite as well, particularly some of those in Years 3 and 6 with their writing.

All aspects of pupils' personal development are good. Their positive attitudes to school contribute to the good teaching and learning. Recent unscheduled admissions of pupils have contributed to the exceptionally wide range of class sizes, with the mixed Year 3 and 4 class being twice the size of the single Year 2 class. This means that there is less room in one class for a wide range of learning activities, although groups of pupils frequently use the library area. In this large class there are fewer opportunities for pupils to receive individual attention from the class teacher but extra adult support is often available. The quality and standards in the Reception Year are good.

The curriculum is good and benefits from strong links with other schools and extensive activities beyond the classroom. Pupils are effectively supported and well cared for, and receive good guidance for their academic and personal development. Pupils thrive in the supportive family atmosphere and this is appreciated by many parents. One wrote, 'The school's ethos is central to its teaching and ensures a warm and caring environment in which the children flourish.'

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership and is ably supported by the deputy. Other teachers are increasingly sharing in the responsibilities of management. The school has made good progress in addressing previously identified issues. Some of these are now strengths, for example, pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT). Good improvement is a result of the commitment and well-focused planning of the leadership team. The school has effective systems for checking on its performance and consequently has an accurate view of all aspects of its work. It has clearly identified and appropriate priorities for further development, and is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the achievement, particularly in writing, of a few groups of boys.
- Review the class structure and deployment of staff to help minimise the inequalities associated with the exceptional variation in class sizes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and whilst standards vary from year to year between the small cohorts, they are above the national average overall. Children in the Reception Year get off to a good start and most are at least in line with national expectations by the end of the year. This good achievement is maintained in Years 1 and 2, and by the end of Year 2, standards in reading are well above average. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well. Very few pupils who have attended the school from Year 1 do not reach at least the standards expected nationally for their age. Almost all the girls achieved well in recent national tests in Years 2 and 6. Boys did not do quite as well, particularly in their writing. Recent assessments by the school indicate this was also the case for some boys in other year groups. The school sets challenging targets for pupils for when they leave the school and most achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's mission statement, 'In our Christian school we do our best to play fairly, behave well and work together' is successfully reflected in the pupils' good personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as a result of the consistent expectations and good examples set by all staff. Behaviour is good, with almost all pupils behaving well throughout the day. A tiny minority have challenging behaviour but this is managed well by the staff.

Pupils enjoy school a lot. They are punctual and their attendance is above average. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. Many of them take part enthusiastically in physical activities, for example, in country dancing or using the fitness trail on the school field, but some find it difficult to resist crisps at break time. Pupils are conscientious in their roles around the school and thoughtful about how they can contribute to environmental issues. There is keen competition to become members of the school council, although the work of this council is still dependent on adult direction. Pupils are gaining a good range of skills, including ICT skills, needed for the next stage of their education and later working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In the Reception Year, good teaching within a class shared by older pupils enables the youngest children to learn well in a stimulating, purposeful and active environment. This is evident, for example, when they explore magnetism by hiding assorted objects

in a sandy landscape. Limited access to outdoor areas has restricted the children's ability to choose to do some activities. The newly built 'conservatory' and fenced outdoor area are expected to overcome this as soon as they are signed off by the building contractors.

Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 are good. Consistent features include the good working ethos in all lessons as a result of good relationships between adults and pupils and the pupils' own positive attitudes to their work. Teachers regularly assess their pupils' progress. They plan activities effectively for groups of pupils with widely differing needs and make good use of ICT in teaching and in learning. Experienced teaching assistants work effectively with small groups of pupils supporting their learning well. Most classrooms contain helpful displays and collections of information to support pupils with their learning. The congested nature of the tables in the Year 3 and 4 classroom, however, limits the flexibility of movement and makes access by adults to specific pupils difficult at times. A few parents report feeling concerned that their children will be 'overlooked in the large class'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the needs of mixed-year groups. It is adapted well to the needs of specific pupils, with additional activities for the most able and support for those with complex learning difficulties. The personal, social, emotional and health education programme is being further strengthened by the introduction of new materials and contributes well to the good personal development of pupils. Other good elements include the use of ICT across the curriculum. The science curriculum is being strengthened by the very good links with the local specialist science college. Not all boys respond well to the range of writing opportunities and experiences. Pupils benefit from many opportunities within the creative and performing arts, for example, by all helping to build a willow giraffe and when performing in concerts in Wells Cathedral. There is a good range of enrichment activities beyond the classroom, including 'wet welly walks on Wednesdays' in Reception and Year 1 and the residential week at the beginning of the year for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All the pupils are well known by the headteacher and staff and this helps pupils new to the school settle in quickly and happily. One parent wrote of her daughter, 'She was immediately made to feel welcome and comes out of school "buzzing".' The few pupils with complex problems are supported well, enabling them to play a full part in the school. Statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously, including regular training updates for all staff. The academic guidance to pupils is particularly effective, with pupils being involved in setting their own short-term targets. In Years 5 and 6, this includes pupils in discussing targets in draft form with parents at home before confirming them. Most of these targets are clear and precise.

They are all displayed prominently in classrooms, helping to maintain their profile and support pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a significant teaching commitment and works exceptionally hard as leader to provide a clear sense of purpose and continuous improvement. Together with the governors she has instigated significant improvements to the fabric of the school, improving facilities for pupils' learning and administrative areas. She networks successfully with other schools and professional bodies to involve the school in local and national developments. Most recently, this has involved the school in a proposal to pilot some innovative approaches to the curriculum.

The deputy head is actively involved with the headteacher in the good strategic planning and systematic monitoring of the work of the school. Other teachers are taking on more responsibilities but some are reluctant to make clear judgements when these involve the work of colleagues. The school has effective systems to collect and analyse pupils' performance data, and it responds well to the information found. Strategic planning is good and subject leaders also have effective plans to improve their subjects. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and are fully involved in important decision making. The governors and leadership team recognise the need to address the imbalance of class sizes and the potential impact these have on pupils' time spent individually with their teachers and on staff workloads.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work. I am pleased to say that yours is a good school. There are many things that are good about it. Here are some of the most important ones:

- You work hard in your lessons and make good progress.
- Your behaviour in class and around the school is good and you think carefully about each other.
- Your teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to learn about and make sure the work is not too hard or too easy.
- Everyone who works at the school takes good care of you all.
- Your headteacher works very successfully with the deputy head to make sure the school is a good place to be. She is always looking for ways of making it even better.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on just two things:

- Help some boys to make better progress, especially in their writing.
- Find ways of overcoming the problems created by having a very large class next to a very small class.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Long Sutton School.