

Leesons Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101633
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307762
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Whatson

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 on roll	
School	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Humby
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Rush
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Leesons Hill St Paul's Cray Orpington BR5 2LS
Telephone number	01689 602786
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Leesons is a one-form entry primary school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Most pupils are from a White British background; a few are from a Gypsy/Romany background. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly average, although the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a large majority have moderate learning difficulties, is very high. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2006 and the Activemark in 2007.

Over the last two years there have been numerous changes to staffing. The current deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher during the autumn term of 2007. A new headteacher started in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, teaching and learning, the provision in the Foundation Stage and pupil attendance. The school is not, therefore, providing an acceptable standard of education and its overall effectiveness is inadequate. This represents unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

The school has experienced a turbulent few years during which standards in Year 6 struggled to rise and those at the end of Year 2 fell dramatically. Pupils did not achieve as well as they could and the underlying causes for the underachievement by pupils were not dealt with.

In September 2007 the establishment of a new leadership structure and a renewed focus on teaching literacy and numeracy began to change the school's culture to that of 'we can'. These improvements have been successfully built upon by the new headteacher. All staff follow the school motto of 'Nurturing Excellence'. Parents are appreciative and supportive of this change. Their views are clearly reflected in the words of one who wrote, 'I am pleased with the progress Leasons has made in the last year.'

The headteacher's quick reorganisation of the school's staff structure, and regular and sharply focused monitoring, have brought about improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching. Teachers now plan following a common format and use a wider set of activities to engage pupils. Many teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils have noticed the improvements in teaching. The views of one Year 6 pupil echoed those of her friends when she said, 'lessons are harder but more fun'. However, in spite of recent improvements and some satisfactory teaching, teaching and learning remain inadequate and there is not enough good teaching to overcome a legacy of pupil underachievement. Lessons lack sufficient challenge or pace to fully engage all pupils so that they achieve their best. There is still some inadequate teaching, especially in mathematics. The headteacher is fully aware of this and staff training is currently focused on this subject.

In Years 1 and 2, because of the improving quality of teaching, and plentiful amounts of additional support, pupils are beginning to make good progress, especially in reading. In Years 3 to 6, although progress has improved too, many pupils continue to make unsatisfactory progress over time. They are not overcoming the legacy of past underachievement. Standards in a few year groups remain very low. Although more pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve the expected level this year than in 2007, standards remain too low in English and mathematics. As a result, not all pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that of their peers.

Many pupils enjoy what the school offers. Attendance has improved recently because of greater vigilance by the school. However, there is more work to do as attendance is still well below average. Behaviour is satisfactory. Staff provide a warm and caring atmosphere in which all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, feel safe and secure. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory care, support and guidance. Together with the

improvement in pupils' progress throughout the school, this means that the school has the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Children enter the Reception with lower than expected skills and knowledge. Adults create a warm and friendly environment, and care well for their needs. Children develop satisfactory personal and emotional skills. Children are not given enough opportunity to initiate play or learning, and this slows their progress. Children learn satisfactorily about the world. Visitors suitably enrich the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, the children were fascinated by some giant snails. However, children develop only limited reading, writing and counting skills, because too little is expected of them and the pace of learning in lessons is too slow; too much time is spent on the carpet. Consequently they enter Year 1 with lower than expected skills. As their progress is inadequately monitored, adults cannot clearly judge what steps to take to improve children's skills. Leaders and managers have some understanding of what needs to be done to overcome the legacy of disrupted provision and leadership, and recent improvements have brought some stability.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics across the school and make sure that all pupils achieve their best.
- Increase the pace and challenge in lessons to accelerate the rate at which pupils learn.
- Improve the quality of the teaching and assessment in the Foundation Stage and provide more opportunities for children to learn through independent play.
- Improve the attendance of those pupils whose record is unsatisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In both Years 2 and 6 in 2007, standards were exceptionally low in English and mathematics. Given their starting point, many pupils in Year 2 underachieved. In Year 6, although pupil progress was broadly satisfactory, their achievement over time was inadequate. It was not sufficient to overcome the legacy of past underachievement and for pupils to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. In science in Year 6 in 2007, achievement was good and standards were broadly average. Because of the school's efforts, achievement has improved, especially in Years 1 and 2, and many pupils are now making good progress in lessons; a minority continue to make satisfactory progress. Recent assessments indicate that standards are much improved, especially in reading, but they remain below the expected level in writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, although there are increasing signs of improved progress, particularly in reading and writing, the majority of pupils continue to make unsatisfactory progress over time. Standards in some year groups remain very low. Current standards in Year 6 are higher than in previous years because it is a more able year group. Standards are not yet high enough in English or mathematics. Current progress in mathematics is not as strong as in English. Progress is not good enough to overcome past underachievement.

In 2007 pupils with learning difficulties, including those with moderate learning difficulties, made slightly less progress than their peers at the school and their standards were lower when compared nationally to similar pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are now beginning to make better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils show by their friendly open demeanour that many enjoy school. Pupils' good social development is reflected in the pride they take in their award-winning garden. Their behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and usually good at break times. Pupils often work sensibly on their own or with others, and most are considerate towards one another. Pupils feel secure; they welcome the opportunity to go to the 'Rainbow Room' if they are troubled and want to talk to an adult. They adopt healthy lifestyles with enthusiasm and understanding, and eagerly participate in sports. Though their attendance over the course of the year is inadequate, it has recently improved considerably. Pupils' opinions are increasingly sought and valued and their ideas are beginning to contribute to the future direction of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is improving, but as several parents noted, numerous staff changes have adversely affected pupils' learning. The headteacher's decisive actions have brought about improvements in the rate at which pupils learn. Lessons are well planned and teachers now use a standardized format. Teachers often use different techniques to engage pupils, but the pace of learning is frequently too slow and pupils become inattentive. Teaching assistants usually provide valuable support, especially to those with learning difficulties. Pupils' progress is improving as teachers are providing increasingly well for pupils of different abilities, but these activities and their delivery do not always offer sufficient challenge. Through focused training the school is addressing the gaps in teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics which is hindering pupils learning in this subject.

Marking is regular. It often contains encouraging comments but it does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests and covers all requirements. This year's introduction of new approaches to teaching literacy, numeracy and linking letters to sounds is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. The school is raising the profile of creativity in the curriculum with increased time for music. It is forging more meaningful links between subjects. There is a good range of well-attended clubs that enrich the curriculum, as do the many trips and visits to places of interest. Adults take care to provide rich cultural experiences, and great artists, writers and thinkers are studied. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn French. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Owing to robust and consistently applied approaches to behaviour management, behaviour is satisfactory. It is often good at lunchtime as pupils benefit from numerous activities to enjoy and a high level of adult involvement. The school cares for every child as an individual. Vulnerable children in particular, and those from Gypsy/Romany backgrounds, are well supported because

their needs are sensitively understood. The energetic measures currently being taken to improve both attendance and punctuality have met with recent success, but attendance remains well below the national average. An increasing number of workshops and progress evenings are effective in helping parents support their children's learning. Pupils' progress is monitored increasingly carefully and this year teachers have become more closely involved in this activity. There is an extensive range of additional support (for example the 'Early Birds' reading group) for those pupils who need them, such as those with moderate learning difficulties. The quality of these interventions is satisfactory. Targets for improvement are sometimes provided in pupils' books, but are not always effectively used. This means that these pupils do not know how they might improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since September 2007, the school's leaders and managers have gained an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have made some progress in tackling them. The school responded well to the involvement of the local authority and the appointment of the new headteacher. She has taken quick and decisive actions that have continued to build upon the earlier improvements. Because of the headteacher's high-quality support and frequent and rigorous monitoring, there is now a greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and this is increasing the progress made by pupils. Although subject leaders are closely involved in school improvement, phase leaders are developing their roles in monitoring the quality of provision. The literacy subject leader has had a significant impact on improving pupils' progress in reading across the school.

Governors recognised that the school was in difficulty. Through their actions, the new leadership team has begun to bring about the necessary improvements. They are beginning to hold the school to account over key areas such as achievement and standards.

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Annex A

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

09 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leasons Primary School, Orpington, BR5 2LS

Some time ago, you may remember that inspectors came to visit your school. Thank you for welcoming us. Talking to you and looking at your work helped us find out more about your school. It was good to hear that many of your parents are happy that you come to this school and that most of you enjoy being here.

There are many things that you should be proud of.

- Your award-winning garden and the Healthy Schools Award.
- You are friendly and polite, and behave well, especially at lunchtimes.
- Teachers and other adults support your personal development well.
- You have been working harder and the standard of your work is already beginning to improve, especially in reading.

However, because some lessons are not challenging enough, standards remain too low and many of you are not making fast enough progress. Because of this, we think that at the moment your school is not providing you with a satisfactory standard of education, so it is being given a notice to improve. This means that other inspectors will visit to check that your school is making enough improvements.

So when other inspectors visit your school again they will check to see if lessons are really challenging that you are all making better progress. You can help by working as hard as you can. Adults in the school are also going to work to improve the Foundation Stage. Inspectors will also check on your attendance, as although it is improving it is still not good enough. You can help by coming to school everyday.

Yours sincerely

David Watson

Lead Inspector