

Linton CofE Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110832
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310432
Inspection date	8 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Mudge
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Sturman
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Church Lane Linton Cambridge CB21 4JX
Telephone number	01223 891421
Fax number	01223 894775

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: average and higher attaining pupils' progress in writing, the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage and the impact of leadership and management at all levels. The evidence base stems from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation, records of pupils' achievement and progress, as well as discussions with senior leaders and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The school's self evaluation is accurate although a little modest at times.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Almost all pupils come from White British families with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. When children enter the Reception classes, their attainment is below expectations for their age, although this is not the case for all children. The proportion taking a free school meal is below average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the International Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about it. One wrote 'The care that the staff give the children is excellent. They go out of their way to make the teaching and activities interesting and varied.' The pupils agree saying, 'It's a really good school and everyone is kind and helpful.'

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Reflecting the Christian ethos, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Links with schools in Islington and Uganda contribute very positively to their cultural development. From their first days in school, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to think about others. Consequently, they are very polite and their behaviour is excellent. The older pupils love acting as 'buddies' to the younger ones, who delight in having an older friend. Pupils receive outstanding care, support and guidance, so they grow in confidence and take on a wide range of responsibilities. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is evident in the way they work and play together. Attendance is good. The exceptional emphasis on healthy lifestyles, particularly through growing and eating their own produce and keeping safe, means that pupils know how to keep fit. They make an excellent contribution to the community, raising funds for a wide range of charities. They take their responsibilities as members of the 'eco council' and the school council very seriously.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress. Standards have been consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics in recent years. An above average proportion reaches the higher levels, but more do this in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. In 2007, standards were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. This represents excellent achievement from their below average attainment on starting school. Although standards are steadily rising, pupils do better in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. The school has recognised this through its very thorough monitoring and evaluation and has already begun to introduce ways to narrow the gap.

There are several reasons why pupils' achievement is outstanding. The excellent curriculum inspires and interests them because it is so very well matched to their needs. It is based on a thematic approach where several subjects are linked together. For example, the recent 'pirate week' gave many opportunities for pupils to develop many skills across the curriculum while dressed as and speaking like a pirate! Embedded within the 'fun' is a very strong emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. This contributes very positively to standards and provides pupils with an excellent foundation for the future.

Excellent teaching means that every pupil is encouraged and helped to do their best. A parent sums it up writing, 'The teachers are very aware of each child's individual ability and help them to reach their potential in different areas.' Each pupil's progress is monitored very closely and extra support is swiftly provided for anyone who is falling behind or striding ahead. Talented support staff contribute very strongly to progress, particularly for those with learning difficulties who receive excellent help. Teachers have very high expectations and challenge pupils of all abilities. They share what pupils are going to learn in each lesson and the pupils show an understanding of what they are doing that is unusual in such young children. For example, they explain what they must do to improve their writing, confidently referring to their own targets.

The school is beginning to help pupils to assess their own and others' work to raise standards further, particularly in writing.

Fundamental to the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She provides a very strong lead to the staff and has kept the school on track during a year without a deputy to support her. The new deputy headteacher has 'hit the ground running' and has already introduced several new ideas to take the school on. There is a strong sense of team spirit between teachers, support staff and governors who all fulfil their roles exceptionally well. Subject leaders and governors have an excellent understanding of their subjects through regular monitoring. The governing body is extremely well informed and led by a knowledgeable and active chair of governors. There is a tangible sense of seeking continual improvement throughout the school. The school's leadership and management are excellent and self-evaluation is accurate. The excellent progress since the previous inspection shows that the school has an excellent capacity for continued improvement. It gives outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Many parents praised the start their children receive. At this early stage in the term, one wrote, 'An impressive start with pirate day, autumn week and a visit planned for next week!' The exciting opportunities offered contribute very positively to the children's flying start. This does not happen by chance. Excellent leadership and management of the Foundation Stage ensure that activities are expertly and imaginatively linked to cover all the areas of learning and no opportunity is missed. For example, children learn to build words by searching for letters written on paper hedgehogs before building them into words. At the same time, they develop their numeracy skills through ordering their hedgehogs. Children thoroughly enjoy school and settle quickly because of the thorough induction procedures. Their behaviour is excellent. The excellent teaching that is tailored so well to the children's needs and interests helps them to make excellent progress. As a result, by the end of the Reception year, most children reach or exceed the expected levels in all the areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the planned initiatives to narrow the gap between standards in writing and those in reading.
- Help pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

8 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Linton CE Infant School, Linton, CB21 4JX

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I found out.

You told me that you go to an excellent school where everyone is kind and friendly and I agree with you. You make excellent progress because you have many exciting things to do in lessons and your teachers make sure that you are given work that is exactly right for you. You all try very hard and you know what you will be learning in your lessons because your teachers explain to you. I was impressed by the way that you were able to tell me what you were learning and how well you knew your targets. Your behaviour is excellent and I thought that you were all very kind to each other. I admired the photos of the youngest children with their 'buddies' and I know that you like to help. I noticed your garden where you have been growing vegetables to keep you healthy and I expect you enjoyed eating them for school lunch! All the grown-ups look after you extremely well and it was good to hear that you feel that you can ask any of them to help you. Mrs Sturman and the governors work very hard to make sure that your school is a lovely place to be. Your families know that you go to one of the best schools there is.

I have asked Mrs Sturman and the teachers to help you do as well in writing as you do in reading. You can help by continuing to do your best. I have also asked if you can check your own and your friends' work to see if you have included everything that the teachers asked you to do.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Linton Infant School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector