

Luton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118319
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312884
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Garratt
Headteacher	Sue Lythgoe
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Alexandra Road Chatham ME4 5AP
Telephone number	01634 843019
Fax number	01634 843019

Age group	4–7
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Inspection number	312884

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is bigger than most schools of the same type and the number on roll has been falling recently. This has led to a reduction in staffing in the last two years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been increasing and is now well above average. Most pupils are White British but the proportion of other minority ethnic groups, especially those from Eastern Europe who are just beginning to learn English, has increased significantly. When they first start school, several do not benefit from pre-school education and their skills and experiences on entry are well below average, especially in language development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good, effective school has continued to consolidate the several strengths identified during the last inspection, despite some significant recent changes in its context. The drop in overall numbers, the marked rise in the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the significant increase in the proportion of pupils recently joining the school with little or no English have placed enormous pressures on all the school's resources. It is a measure of the good, sensitive leadership of the headteacher, the effective contribution of other leaders and the good support and challenge provided by the governing body that the school has been able to cope so effectively with these challenges. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she ensures that the care for each individual and the overall focus on raising standards are at the heart of the school's work through the comprehensive improvement plan.

The care given to pupils who may be new to the school, vulnerable or distressed and the way teachers use data to monitor the pupils' progress are outstanding. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Behaviour and attitudes are also good. Pupils clearly enjoy school and they have a good appreciation of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. However, attendance has remained well below average and too many pupils are late for school, which limits the effectiveness of morning routines and the progress they make. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging and being a part of the school community.

The drive to raise standards has ensured that children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, although many do not reach the learning goals expected of pupils of this age by the beginning of Year 1. Most pupils continue to make good progress in their reading and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. The very low standards in the 2007 national tests were largely the effect of the increasing number of pupils with little or no English who joined Year 2 during the year. Assessment data show that Year 2 pupils are on track to reach broadly average standards in reading and mathematics but standards in writing remain lower. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English for the first time make good progress in reaching their individual targets. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and the curriculum matches their needs and interests well. Teachers manage pupils effectively and use a wide range of resources which interest and challenge them. Planning is usually clear, but does not always show how the more able pupils could extend their understanding. Pupils respond positively to lessons, but some of the teaching is inconsistent. The good curriculum emphasises the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills well, although the initiative to improve writing has not yet been fully successful. A good number of visits and visitors enhance the curriculum. These strengths mean that the school is now in a good position to secure further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a particularly good start because the curriculum is planned carefully to meet their needs and teachers and their assistants are well prepared, enthusiastic and sometimes inspiring. Children are made to feel welcome and the positive way that they are managed helps them to settle quickly to their learning. There is good emphasis on promoting basic communication and counting skills and most children make good progress in these areas of learning. Accurate assessments are made of what children understand and can do and this information is used well to refocus teaching when necessary. Good use is made of the small

outside activity area but imaginative resources are limited. The school has plans for its refurbishment. The Foundation Stage is effectively led and managed with the manager leading by example.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 1 and 2, especially in writing, by building successfully on the good start children get in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that all teachers consistently provide challenging extension work for more able pupils.
- Work closely with some parents to ensure their children's regular and prompt attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children's skills and experiences are well below those expected for their age when they first enter the school, and have declined since the last inspection. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Although most do not reach the expected goals for learning by the start of Year 1, standards in 2007 were higher. The 2007 national tests results in Year 2 have been dropping recently but evidence shows that, because of the good quality teaching, pupils in the current Year 2 are making good progress and achieving well. Standards in reading and mathematics are close to the national average but remain below average in writing. Pupils learning English for the first time and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their own learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. The development of pupils' appreciation of right and wrong and their sense of belonging to the school community are particularly strong. Pupils are happy and relaxed and they behave well in class, although playtimes are sometimes boisterous. They work willingly together and contribute sensibly to group work. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds work and play happily together. Pupils know how to keep safe and healthy. They know which foods are nutritious, even though some do not always show this in their lunch box choices. Pupils contribute well to the school community through activities such as 'Helping Hands' and 'Playground Friends' and take these responsibilities seriously. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance has continued to remain well below average. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes well and most have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and value their work and responses in class. This makes a strong impact on pupils' self-esteem and their personal and emotional development. Most lessons are well planned and purposeful and are taught at a brisk pace. The focus of the lesson is shared with pupils so that they know clearly, what they are expected to learn. The summing up at the end of the lesson is used well by teachers to assess the progress pupils have made. Teachers use resources effectively, such as the interesting collections of foods in Year 2 and interactive whiteboards, to make lessons come alive. This 'hands-on', practical approach meets the needs of pupils very well. However,

there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school and teachers do not always offer enough challenging extension work for pupils that are more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully planned and well balanced. It is focused on the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills, but also emphasises work in art, music and drama. Initiatives to improve literacy skills, such as teaching specific letter sounds, the emphasis on art and drama, and the increased use of 'talking partners', are helping to raise overall standards but have been much slower to make an impact on improving standards in writing. The personal, social and health education programme makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and the promotion of their self-esteem. Pupils indicate how much they enjoy the good range of planned visits, visitors and clubs that they attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute strongly to pupils' personal development and their good progress, but have been slow to improve attendance. All staff know the pupils and their families well and, together, they ensure that pupils' social and emotional needs are met effectively. The care taken over individual pupils is impressive. Comprehensive safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after and their particular needs quickly assessed. The way in which the school has responded very rapidly in providing nurture and language support for recently arrived immigrants has been excellent. The school provides a very good range of intervention groups and works closely with outside agencies when required. Procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are very well established and are used very effectively by school leaders and class teachers to ensure that all groups make the best possible progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There are strengths in leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and ensures that this is promoted effectively through its work. The importance of raising academic standards is strongly emphasised, together with the need to meet the needs of the increasing number of vulnerable pupils in the school. These aims are brought together well in a detailed school improvement plan which is clearly at the heart of the school's work. Other senior teachers make a valuable contribution to the school's inclusive ethos and work, although their roles and responsibilities are not formalised clearly enough. Governors support and challenge the school well. Monitoring procedures are good and all leaders are involved in the process. This is helping to ensure effective self-evaluation and providing a good basis for further improvements to be made.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

3 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Luton Infant School, Chatham, ME4 5AP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently to see how well you were doing. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

We think you go to a good school that is helping you to make good progress in your learning. You are doing better in reading and mathematics than you do in writing.

Here are some of the best things about your school:

- Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start to their time at school.
- All the adults in the school look after you very well so that you feel safe and secure.
- You behave well and are enthusiastic in lessons.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors lead and manage the school well and they have coped very well with some challenging changes that have happened recently.
- Teachers use information about how you are doing in reading, writing and mathematics very well indeed.
- Your lessons are made interesting and fun by a good number of visits and visitors to the school.

There are a few things that we think could be even better:

- You need to work very hard with your teachers to do even better in your writing.
- Teachers need to make sure that there is always harder, extension work for those who can do it.
- You all need to make sure that you come to school regularly and be there promptly at the start of each morning.

Thank you again for your welcome.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin Lead inspector