

Lydden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118400
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312921
Inspection date	1 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Maceachen
Headteacher	Carole Davies
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Stonehall Lydden Dover CT15 7LA
Telephone number	01304 822887
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

There are markedly more boys than girls in this small school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. An average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties, mostly emotional and behavioural. Because the number in each year group is small, ability ranges vary from year to year. Children mostly start school with attainment at the level expected for their age, although it was a more able group who joined the school this year and last.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lydden Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and there are a number of things it does well. Parents strongly value 'Lydden's strong community feel' and the way pupils are 'well cared for and supported at all times'. Because they feel safe and secure in a school where everyone knows and looks out for each other, pupils grow in confidence and they enjoy coming to school. As a result, attendance in 2007 was excellent.

Pupils behave well and are attentive in lessons. They are keen to learn because they like the imaginative way that teachers link subjects together to make learning interesting and fun. They especially enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which is impressive for a school of this size. The mostly able children in the Reception Year make good progress because they rise to the challenge of working with older ones in their mixed-age class. As a result, standards at the end of the Foundation Stage have been high. Results have generally been in the broadly average range in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests, although they were rather lower in 2007. The test results of pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 show that they generally make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points over their time in school, preparing them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Although there is much good teaching, progress is not as good as it could be in those lessons where teachers do not match work sufficiently closely to the wide range of both ability and ages in their class. That is not to say that the school fails to cater for individual needs. Quite the contrary; able Year 6 mathematicians, for example, have been given the opportunity to work on secondary school mathematics. Too often, however, pupils are given similar work to do in lessons, with teachers planning only for what they describe as 'differentiation by outcome'. Inevitably, tasks that offer good challenge to younger pupils meet the needs less well of those pupils who are two years older.

The poor results in the Year 6 tests in 2007 were a jolt to school leaders. With the support of the local authority, a number of changes have been introduced aimed at boosting achievement. These have helped give the school a sound capacity to improve. The headteacher's teaching load has limited the time available for management tasks. Governors have revised staffing arrangements to give her more management time. Lessons are monitored regularly but sometimes these observations focus more on the features of teaching and pupils' attitudes than on gauging the progress pupils are making and the learning that is going on. Though individually pupils know what they need to do to improve their work, the targets set by school leaders for pupils' progress have not always been challenging enough. Targets have been based only on standards from the previous year and have not taken enough account of performance at the end of the Foundation Stage and the end of Year 2. This means that where a pupil has slipped behind in one year, their underachievement rolls forward in lower targets for the following year. These elements contribute to school leaders having an overly favourable view of the school's academic success.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

By the end of the Reception Year, all children are working securely within the early learning goals expected of children this age, and most are exceeding them. In 2007, children scored exceptionally highly in the end-of-Reception assessments. While in Reception, children have

fewer opportunities for child-initiated activities than is common for Foundation Stage children because they are taught alongside and do similar work to pupils in Years 1 and 2. This means that children are certainly given activities that challenge them, and the particularly able children who have joined the school over the past two years respond very well to this. The children quickly settle into school routines and they learn to work together productively. Facilities are good, in an environment that provides a good stimulus to children's imagination and to their learning, but access to outdoor play is restricted by the limitations of the buildings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that leaders' monitoring focuses clearly on the progress pupils make in lessons and over time, and that challenging targets are set for pupils' progress .
- Ensure that work in lessons always offers appropriate challenge to the full age and ability range in each class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In most years, pupils' broadly average standards represent satisfactory achievement. Although the number of pupils who join or leave the school partway through their education is lower than in many other schools, the small numbers in each cohort serve to exacerbate the effect of pupil mobility on the school's overall national test results. It had an exaggerated impact on the school's Year 6 scores in 2007, which were very low. However, those pupils who were at the school at least from Year 2 to Year 6 made satisfactory progress. Though standards in the current Year 6 are still below average, they are notably higher than in 2007. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make similar progress to others in their classes because staff manage behaviour well. Others with learning difficulties also progress at a satisfactory rate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy school. As one very satisfied parent commented, 'My daughter is very happy and looks forward to school every day'. Pupils are often enthusiastic in lessons, although sometimes their attentiveness wanes when they are expected to sit passively for too long. A notable feature of Lydden is just how friendly and polite the pupils are. Older pupils readily take responsibility for helping the younger ones, for example, as playground 'buddies' and as play leaders organising games, although some older pupils have resigned their play leader roles because they do not feel they have enough opportunities for soccer. Pupils have a good appreciation of the need for a healthy lifestyle. Even if some would like more football, they take up the option to take part in a wide range of sports, and they know the importance of a healthy diet: a Year 1 girl earnestly explained to inspectors, 'I always eat my fruit!' Because relationships throughout the school are so good, pupils behave well and they are well looked after, Lydden is a school where pupils feel safe and secure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know and get on well with their pupils and these good relationships encourage pupils to contribute positively to lessons. Pupils comment that, 'We like all our teachers because they

help us'. Teachers manage their classes well, so that behaviour is good, including from those pupils identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because teachers do not consistently match work closely enough to the varied abilities and ages of the pupils. Where all pupils are doing the same or very similar work, it does not always make pupils, particularly the older pupils in each class, think hard enough or achieve as well as they could. In some lessons, teachers expect pupils to sit passively for too long. Where this occurs, pupils become fidgety and their concentration lapses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There has been good improvement to the school site and facilities since the school was last inspected, including much improved provision for information and communication technology. Pupils comment that they like their time at Lydden because 'we get lots of fun things to do'. Imaginative links between a broad range of subjects make learning more relevant, purposeful and enjoyable and are having a beneficial effect, particularly on pupils' writing. Homework is used well to reinforce the work pupils do in class, and it helps to capitalise on the good support from parents. The curriculum also benefits from a good range of visits and an array of well-attended extra-curricular activities that is impressive for a school of this size.

The age range in each class alters in some years and this has made it difficult for the school to plan a cycle of history and other topics that avoids repetition. The recent introduction of a skills-based curriculum where pupils build and develop their skills as they move up the school is intended as a means of compensating for this and ensuring that pupils build on what they have learnt before. This change, however, is too recent to have shown an impact on standards. Although the curriculum for children in the Reception Year is based more on the National Curriculum for Years 1 and 2 than is usual, this is working to the advantage of the able children currently in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong pastoral support for pupils is evident in the good safeguarding procedures and the focus on individual pupils' well-being. The school has a productive partnership with parents, who are keen to support the school and their children's education. Pupils have personal targets for English and mathematics which set out the next steps in their learning, and they know and refer to them. These give them good guidance on how to improve their work. Some marking gives similar guidance, but this is not consistently so. In some cases, marking only acknowledges work with ticks and words of encouragement, but does not offer pointers for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders' lesson observations do not always home in enough on gauging the progress pupils are making in their learning. This means that monitoring of lessons and pupils' progress, though regular, has given school leaders an overly positive view of the school's effectiveness. The school leaders have been unable to identify why progress has not been better and why standards have generally only been average and below. The targets that leaders have set for the school's Year 6 tests have not been as challenging as they were thought to be because they have failed

to take sufficient account of the fact that pupils have sometimes fallen behind in previous years and so had further ground to make up. Recent changes, including a reduced teaching commitment and more management time for the headteacher, as well as a range of support from the local authority, mean school leaders are now better placed to drive for improved standards to match the high quality of care and personal development that is such a strong feature of the school.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	1
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?	3
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.

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	4
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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lydden Primary School, Dover CT15 7LA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Lydden is giving you a satisfactory education and there are many things about the school that are good.

We were particularly pleased to see how well you all get on with each other at Lydden. The older pupils certainly help the younger ones, and this helps to make the school such a happy, friendly place. Your attendance last year was fantastic. Well done! You are looked after well and the school is a place where you are made to feel safe. We were also delighted to see how much you know about how to keep yourselves healthy. Many of the clubs help you to keep fit, and we were impressed at the number of you that join the various clubs on offer.

You like your teachers – some of you told us that they make the school such a good place to be. We have asked them to help you make better progress in lessons by making sure that the work you do is always closely matched to the wide age and ability range in each class. Sometimes when you are all set the same work, it stretches the younger ones in the class rather more than the older ones. Mind you, we were impressed at how the very youngest children in Ladybirds rise to the challenge when they are given difficult work to do!

Your headteacher and other staff visit lessons from time to time to see how they are going. We have asked that when they do this, they pay particular attention to seeing how fast you are learning and how much progress you are making. We have also asked them to make sure that when they set targets for your progress, these help you build not just on how you did the previous year but also how well you should be expected to do based on your progress in the years before.

As for your personal targets, we were pleased to see that you make good use of them and that they are helping you to improve your work. If you ask your teachers how you can make your work even better, we are sure that your learning will go from strength to strength.

Best wishes, Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector