

Longwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124104
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314811
Inspection date	25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	120
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	53
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dena Tamplin
Headteacher	Louise Thomas Burns
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Allton Avenue Mile Oak Tamworth B78 3NH
Telephone number	01827 475030
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school where most pupils are taught in mixed age classes. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision includes 'Little Oaks' pre-school, which takes children aged two to four, and the school's own Reception class, which caters for children aged four to five. Most pre-school children subsequently attend the school.

The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds but the proportion of these pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing. Considerable numbers of pupils join or leave the school at different times, particularly after Year 2. There has been considerable disruption in staffing recently due to illness and maternity leaves. The headteacher, who was acting headteacher last year, took up the position full time only three weeks ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Measures to reverse a decline in the school's performance since the previous inspection successfully accelerated pupils' progress and raised standards in 2008. Although not entirely even throughout the school, achievement is now satisfactory and standards are broadly average by Year 6. Progress and provision are outstanding in the pre-school and good in Reception. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The gap between them and other pupils is narrower than that found nationally.

The main reason for the improvements seen in 2008 is the headteacher's drive, enthusiasm and excellent understanding of how to get the best out of staff, pupils and governors. Her involvement in the classroom is one of the key factors in helping to raise the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher levels in the national tests in 2008. The sense of teamwork she has created has resulted in good procedures, now used consistently by all teachers, to assess and record how well pupils are doing, and ultimately to plan the next steps in their learning. Supported well by key staff, and increasingly by the governors, the headteacher keeps a close check on pupils' progress and provides teachers with good guidance on how to improve. Under her leadership, the school has gained a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and has set challenging targets for improvement. Systems to help it get there are relatively new, but are steadily becoming an integral part of how it operates. Currently, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory but it is improving rapidly.

While teaching is satisfactory, it too is getting better, and some good and outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers have risen well to the challenge of accelerating pupils' progress. They plan pupils' work well and their marking helps pupils understand how to reach the targets they now have for literacy and numeracy. Pupils appreciate this. However, teachers are not taking enough advantage of the many opportunities available to them to extend pupils' ability to write at length, or to use and apply their mathematical skills in practical, problem solving situations. The curriculum, though satisfactory, does not provide pupils with enough explicit guidance on how to do this. Pupils enjoy school. They behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. However, their understanding of different cultures and traditions in Britain, and of how such understanding contributes to community cohesion, is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, the school works closely with parents and external agencies to help pupils' learning and personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about what the school does for their children, describing the headteacher and staff as open, approachable, willing to listen and very helpful. This is all part of the good care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils and increasingly for their parents, for example through its family learning project.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school and the Little Oaks pre-school both cater particularly well for children's health, welfare and personal, social and emotional development. The provision in Little Oaks is outstanding. It is led and managed exceptionally well. Children aged two to four years of age start there with very underdeveloped skills and knowledge. The pre-school nurtures them really well, preparing them and their parents very effectively for the move to Reception. When children start in Reception, their language and mathematical skills are still well below those expected for their age. However, their greatly improved personal development enables them to settle

quickly and form good relationships with each other and with adults. This greatly benefits their learning and Reception staff build on it well, as was evident only three weeks into the new school year. As a result, the children get off to a flying start.

In 2008, standards were below average at the end of Reception, with girls doing better than boys. Despite the differences, this represents good progress from the children's starting points. Throughout the EYFS, staff are vigilant about recording children's progress during both adult-led and child-initiated activities. In Reception, there is scope to give children more opportunities to select activities for themselves. Outdoor learning is promoted really well in the pre-school. The facility for outdoor learning in Reception is relatively new and equipment for it still relatively limited. Staff are beginning to use it effectively, for example to teach literacy, but it is not used fully to promote all six areas of learning. All EYFS staff have a good understanding of how children of this age learn, and the close links between the school and the pre-school contribute to the children's progress, ensuring continuity of learning for them. Staff plan rich, rewarding and exciting experiences that rouse children's curiosity and foster in them a love of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in Years 1 to 6 more opportunities to write at length and to use their mathematical skills to solve practical problems.
- Give teachers clearer guidance on how to promote literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects and check that they take every opportunity to do this.
- Improve pupils' understanding of different cultures and traditions in Britain. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Improvements in achievement, which is satisfactory, mean that standards are rising following a period of significant decline. The decline was caused in part by disruptions in staffing, including at leadership level, all of which have now been overcome. Standards are broadly average in Year 6. In 2008, the national test results showed a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. Traditionally, mathematics has been much weaker than English but it is beginning to improve. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. It is improving here too as teachers make better use of the clearer information they now have about pupils' progress in EYFS and Year 1. This means that although standards were still well below average in the Year 2 assessments in 2008, they are now just below average in the current Year 2 class.

Throughout the school, pupils do not use their literacy and numeracy skills well enough in other subjects therefore missing opportunities to reach their targets more quickly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The gap between them and other pupils is narrower than nationally because of the good provision made for them. There are no significant differences between boys and girls by Year 6. The school successfully narrows the gap that is evident in EYFS by Year 2, and eliminates it by Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils find lessons interesting and enjoyable, and praise their teachers for helping them to learn. They fully understand the importance of getting on with everybody and they work and play amicably together. They are polite and mannerly, willing to help each other and eager to show how well they are doing. They report there is no bullying or harassment of any sort in school and are confident that staff will always help them to sort out any problems or concerns. Pupils readily accept responsibility, for example as school councillors and mentors for other pupils. They raise money for charity and take part in local events. All of this develops in them a good sense of their place in the community. They understand well the need for different people to live and work amicably together. However, their understanding of the similarities and differences between the different cultures that make up British society is relatively weak.

Attendance is satisfactory and improving but a small number of parents still do not ensure their children's regular attendance despite the school's best efforts. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise and they participate wholeheartedly in sporting activities. Large numbers attend the good range of clubs and other activities available to them in and beyond the normal school day. These include a residential visit to Shugborough, which Year 6 pupils clearly enjoyed tremendously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is still some way to go to ensure that pupils' learning is continuous throughout the school but a promising start has been made on this. All teachers now assess and record pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy in the same way, and set targets for the pupils. The headteacher, literacy and numeracy leaders are working hard with staff to achieve accuracy in assessment at all times. Although not totally secure throughout the school, teachers are beginning to understand their part in helping pupils to make the best possible progress by Year 6.

Planning is good for literacy and numeracy as teachers match pupils' work to their different ages and stages of learning. They use their teaching assistants well to achieve this, and the quality of pupils' learning is improving rapidly as a result. In an outstanding lesson with pupils in Year 6, the pace of learning was really fast as pupils engaged in imaginative, well planned role play that greatly increased their understanding of what it must have been like to be an evacuee during the Second World War. This lesson very successfully promoted pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills as well as their historical knowledge and understanding. Not all teaching makes as effective links between subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Planning for literacy and numeracy has recently been strengthened and pupils' progress has improved as a result. However, the curriculum is not explicit enough about how to promote literacy, especially writing, and numeracy, especially using mathematical knowledge in problem solving, in different subjects. The school is in the very early stages of establishing links between subjects in order to do this.

The curriculum supports most aspects of personal development and well-being effectively. It uses the good range of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities particularly well to do this. The missing link is in developing pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and the promotion of community cohesion.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including those for child protection, are good. All staff understand and follow them. The sensitive support the school provides for pupils who find learning difficult, whatever the reason, contributes to the good progress these pupils make. Pupils readily talk about their literacy targets and explain what they need to do to reach them. They are less clear about their numeracy targets. This mirrors teachers' marking, which, whilst good, makes it clearer to pupils what they need to do to reach their literacy targets than to reach their numeracy targets. Pupils appreciate the way teachers' marking helps them to improve their work. Systems for assessing pupils' work in other subjects are relatively limited at present.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher guides and motivates staff well. She keeps a close check on how effectively pupils learn in every class. Key staff, such as those leading literacy and numeracy, take an active part in this. Other subject leaders are set to evaluate provision in their subjects this year and to examine where subjects can usefully be linked together to accelerate learning. The school has started to make good use of the information it now has about pupils' progress to build their learning up step by step. This is evident in the way it groups pupils according to ability rather than age for some sessions in order to accelerate their progress. Staff respond well to the challenges they face as the new systems become embedded.

Governors fulfil their monitoring role satisfactorily. Well informed by the headteacher, they are now setting challenging targets for improvement. They fulfil their duty to promote community cohesion satisfactorily. However, they have not ensured that this includes teaching pupils about the range of cultures in Britain today. The well founded school improvement plan arises out of the school's accurate evaluation of its performance. It provides a secure scaffold on which to build and is underpinned by the school's imminent involvement in an intensive support programme for literacy and numeracy. The school has started to implement several aspects of the programme ahead of the formal start.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longwood Primary School, Mile Oak, Tamworth B78 3NH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school yesterday, and for talking to us about what you do there. It was good to hear and to see how much you enjoy school and that you want to do well. This letter is a summary of what we found.

The most important thing is that your school, which is satisfactory at present, is getting better all the time. Those of you who attend 'Little Oaks' pre-school get off to a flying start, and you then make good progress in Reception. Your headteacher is particularly good at helping the staff and governors understand how to help all of you learn faster. At present, you make satisfactory progress. However, your teachers understand fully what the headteacher wants them to do to improve that progress. They tell you about what they expect you to learn, give you targets to reach to help you get there, and mark your work well so that you are clear about what you need to do to improve.

We were very impressed by your good behaviour and the polite way you speak to and help each other and the staff. We noted how good you are at holding doors open for adults and for other children. We found you have a good understanding of the importance of following a healthy lifestyle. You know how to keep yourselves and others safe. You were certainly quick to tell us that there is no bullying in your school and that staff quickly sort out any problems as they arise. They provide you with good care, support and guidance in all aspects of your life at school.

We have asked the school to concentrate on the following to help you make faster progress in literacy and numeracy:

- to give you more opportunities to write at length and to use your mathematical skills to solve practical problems
- to give teachers clearer guidance on how to ensure you use your literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

A third thing we have asked the school to do is to improve your understanding of the different cultures and traditions in Britain today.

You can help in all of these by continuing to listen carefully to what your teachers tell you and by doing your best at all times.

Yours sincerely Doris Bell Lead inspector