

Linden Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118586
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	317226
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Wade
Headteacher	Edward Cottle
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2006
School address	Stanhope Road Ashford TN23 5RN
Telephone number	01233 621133
Fax number	01233 634828

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves an area of significant deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than average at around 40%. Many more pupils than average (about one in every four) have learning difficulties and disabilities. Some of these are educated in the school's speech and language unit, which currently caters for 22 pupils. The proportion of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language is growing but is not significantly higher than average. Around half the children in the Reception classes did not attend a nursery. When Linden Grove School was inspected in November 2006, it was judged to require special measures.

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 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Nevertheless, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI 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 raising attainment and improving leadership and management.

Standards have risen since the last inspection but they remain lower than they should be, particularly in English. Pupils now make satisfactory progress, but the legacy of previous underachievement means that there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This is still leading to inadequate achievement by the time pupils leave in Year 6.'

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Good attention is paid to making sure that pupils are safe and provided with opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and many say that they enjoy lessons and like coming to school. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and are keen to contribute to improving the school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory because pupils are set challenging targets and teachers' planning increasingly takes account of the needs and interests of groups of pupils with different abilities. In the speech and language unit, pupils who have specific learning difficulties do well because there are high expectations for what they can achieve and learning is challenging and exciting. Recently introduced tracking systems ensure that teachers are well informed about pupils' progress and able to provide the necessary support or challenge. The curriculum has been developed and adapted so that it now provides better opportunities for pupils to develop literacy skills.

Those responsible for leading and managing the school have a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and have taken action to address successfully many of the areas for improvement that were identified by the previous inspection. The role of middle leaders is developing and the leaders are increasingly held accountable for the standards achieved in their areas of responsibility. However, middle leadership, although improving quickly, is not yet of a consistently high standard to ensure that rapid improvement is sustained. Parents are very positive about the care and support that the school provides and a typical comment from a parent was that 'staff are passionate about what they do and my daughter has never enjoyed school more'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage because they are well taught and enjoy a well planned curriculum. Most arrive in the Nursery and Reception classes with a level of skills that is very low compared with expectations for their ages. Their social and literacy skills are particularly low. Staff in the Foundation Stage sensibly focus on building children's confidence and readiness to learn, and developing their language and communication skills. There is a consistent approach to learning in all three classes, and adults work well together to create a supportive and caring atmosphere where children feel settled and secure.

Teachers and nursery nurses work hard to improve children's vocabulary and fluency, and offer children an exciting range of activities and experiences that they can talk about.

Good use is made of the accommodation available, particularly the extensive outdoor areas, and the children enjoy exploring the wide range of resources on offer. Some of these, though, are becoming shabby and in need of replacement. The Foundation Stage is well managed. Children's progress is carefully assessed and tracked, and work is well matched to needs. As a result, children make good progress throughout their time in Nursery and Reception, although their standards are still below average when they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on improvements to teaching and learning so that all pupils can make up lost ground and achieve as well as they should.
- Develop the capacity to improve by establishing consistent, high quality, middle level leadership and management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children join the school with standards that are well below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage but by the time they start Year 1 many are still not achieving the standards expected for their age. Progress across the rest of the school is now satisfactory and many pupils are starting to make up the ground lost in earlier years. Despite recent improvements, pupils have achieved significantly less well over time than they should have.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships at all levels are good and this supports the pupils' personal development and learning. The school is working towards accreditation as a healthy school and pupils are encouraged and enabled to eat healthily and develop healthy lifestyles. Their physical development is further enhanced by sporting activities offered as after school clubs that include football, netball, rugby and dance. There is also a good range of play equipment available at break times, which the pupils say has helped improve their behaviour. A clear anti-bullying policy is in place and pupils understand the need to report incidents and say they have confidence in the staff to deal with them. Attendance has improved but, despite the good range of measures used to bring about improvement, it remains below average. A minority of parents do not support the school's good efforts to improve attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. There is still not enough consistently good or better teaching to accelerate progress and raise standards sufficiently in most year groups. Many lessons are characterised by good challenge, are delivered at a brisk pace, and allow pupils to evaluate their own success. Teachers are getting better at planning the main work activities at different levels. However, there is still not enough account taken of the needs of different groups of pupils when the whole class is working together with the teacher. Expectations are not high enough with regard to pupils' handwriting and the

presentation of work. The improved support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the main school means that these pupils are more focused and make satisfactory progress.

Most teachers provide pupils with regular feedback, usually identifying if the expected learning outcome has been achieved, but not all check that pupils follow up their comments where required. Better use of tracking procedures means that all teachers can now keep a close eye on pupils who are not doing as well as they should and identify those who would benefit from additional support or challenge. Targets for literacy and numeracy have been refined to take better account of the wide range of abilities in classes. These help pupils in different groups to know what they need to do to improve their work. However, not enough reference is made to targets, particularly in marking pupils' work or during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has been recently revised and improved and is satisfactory. Learning opportunities in Year 1 to Year 6 are now better matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. There are more frequent opportunities for key skills in literacy and mathematics to be developed through other subjects such as history, art and information and communication technology (ICT). These contribute to the pupils' increased enjoyment of lessons. The revised curriculum in Year 1 provides a smoother transition for children coming from the Foundation Stage. The school recognises, however, that the strategies it has put in place to develop basic skills in literacy and mathematics are too recent to have made a significant impact on standards and achievement. The speech and language unit continues to provide a good range of learning opportunities that meet pupils' needs well and ensures these pupils make good progress.

The good provision for extra-curricular enrichment through the use of clubs, visits and visitors has been maintained.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are robust and effective. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for and that they know who to go to if they need help. Good pupil tracking systems are in place so that teachers have reliable information on the progress that pupils make and can quickly identify those who are underachieving. Target setting has improved so that pupils have challenging targets for reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils demonstrate that they know what their targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. An appropriate range of intervention strategies has been introduced to support pupils in the main school who have additional needs and this is beginning to have a positive impact on their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

An effective leadership and management team is now evolving under the good guidance and leadership of the acting headteacher. The new management structure is becoming effective as roles and responsibilities are developed and clearly understood. Key members of the leadership team have been in post for less than one year but, despite this, they have a good understanding

of the school's strengths and weaknesses and clear plans for the actions they need to take. However, many of these actions are at an early stage of implementation and it is not possible to judge their full impact on raising standards. A rigorous schedule of lesson observations has resulted in support and training for teachers which has improved teaching and learning. Governors are well informed and have increased capacity to hold the school to account. The potential for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well 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	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?	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?	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	3
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

9 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linden Grove, Ashford TN23 5RN

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by helping us find out about your school. You made us feel very welcome and we enjoyed talking to you about your work and your targets. I particularly enjoyed watching those of you who were in the unit preparing tea for your guests. We think that there has been a lot of improvement since the last inspection, but that there are still a few things that need to be better. The school no longer requires special measures but, because there is still work to do, we have given it a Notice to Improve and inspectors will continue to visit to see how well you are doing.

- These are some of the best things we found out about your school.
- Your behaviour is good and most of you enjoy learning.
- Everybody gets on well together and you know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- You are learning more than you were and making better progress.
- Your teachers arrange plenty of extra activities for you to enjoy.
- Your headteacher and his team are working hard to make your school a great place to learn.
- To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do:
 - help you make even better progress so that by the time you leave the school you have learnt as much as other children of your age
 - make sure the school is run well so that it is the very best that it can be.

You can help by continuing to work hard and always doing your best. Thank you for all you are already doing to make your school as good as can be. It was a privilege and a pleasure for us to share it with you for the two days of our visit.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis Her Majesty's Inspector