

Longvernal Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109107
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	324899
Inspection date	7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Goodchild

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)	72
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Lewis
Headteacher	Andy Rhys-Jones
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Clapton Road Midsomer Norton Radstock BA3 2LP
Telephone number	01761 412777
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Longvernal is a small primary school in Midsomer Norton to the south of Bristol and Bath. The majority of children are from White British backgrounds. There are no children with English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties is significantly above the national average, with most having speech, language and communication delays or emotional and social difficulties. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The number and gender of children in each year group varies from year to year. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are taught in a mixed-age class that includes pupils from Year 1. A high proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant decrease in the number of children on roll. Currently, the school has an acting headteacher. A substantive headteacher has been appointed from 1 September 2009. The school has close links with the privately managed pre-school unit, breakfast and after-school clubs housed in the same building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Longvernal is a satisfactory school. The school works hard to ensure a high standard of care for its pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and receive effective additional support. The school receives good support from specialist agencies. Parents are supportive of the school and are well informed about its work through regular newsletters. A few parents expressed concern about the standard of behaviour but recognise there has been a significant improvement since the introduction of new behaviour management procedures. Through good provision in personal, social and health education and by increasing the range of creative activities available to pupils, such as the 'Play Pod', previous issues with behaviour at lunch times have been resolved. Pupils' behaviour and relationships are good and ensure that the climate in the classroom is conducive to learning.

Year groups are very small and the academic standards of children when they start school vary widely from year to year. The current Reception class started school at the levels expected for four year olds. As the result of satisfactory provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, children's progress is satisfactory. In the current Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the results of teacher assessments and the school's own tracking data show pupils have made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Staffing issues, that included turnover and absence, have now been resolved as have behaviour issues that previously were a barrier to learning. School data show that pupils currently in Year 6 make good progress relative to their low starting points. Preliminary results for the 2009 tests indicated pupils exceeded predicted targets in English and mathematics with 25% gaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics. However, the standards achieved in national tests are likely to be below average.

Teaching is satisfactory although there is evidence of some good practice in lessons seen. However, assessment information is not consistently used to ensure that work is well matched to the current learning needs of all pupils and this affects progress, particularly in mixed-age classes. Learning objectives are not always clearly defined and, at times, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has effectively steered the school through a period of turbulence and has been instrumental in bringing about improvements and raising staff morale. The school has received good support from the local authority. Links with the local community are good but provision to develop pupils' understanding of the wider and global community is underdeveloped. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development and has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Since its previous inspection, the school has recently made satisfactory progress in improving attendance which is now broadly average. The school has worked hard to build links with parents and standards in literacy have improved.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children are happy, feel safe and secure, and enjoy the range of activities throughout the day. Relationships are positive and staff are committed to ensuring children's well-being. The current theme of the 'Seaside' gives children good opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, opportunities are often missed to develop and extend

children's communication, listening and language skills, with the result that children's development in this area of learning is not as strong as others. The personal, social and emotional development of children is satisfactory and they play well together and gain confidence throughout the year. They are encouraged to become independent and reflect on what they have learned through play. Learning objectives of planned activities are often too broad and lack focus. It was evident during discussions at the end of the session that children were unclear about what knowledge or skills they had acquired during the play session. Expectations of what children can achieve are not always high enough. Teachers' expertise in assessing children's attainment on entry is developing so that rates of progress can now be tracked more accurately over time. Current tracking data suggest that children have made satisfactory progress over the year compared with their starting points and most have attained the expected age-related standards. Teaching assistants effectively support learning. The provision runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Make better use of assessment to ensure a more effective match of work to pupils' learning needs, particularly in mixed-age classes.
- More clearly define the learning objective and focus of lessons and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve the provision to develop pupils' understanding of the wider and global communities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Staffing and behaviour issues in the recent past had adversely affected the progress that pupils made. These issues have now been resolved and as a result, there is clear evidence that pupils' achievement is improving and is now satisfactory. In the current group of Year 2 pupils, only three started in Year 1 at the expected standard. As a result, despite the satisfactory progress made, standards are still below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Overall pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress. Preliminary national test results for 2009 together with the school's tracking data, indicate that the current Year 6 pupils made good progress and exceeded predicted targets in English and mathematics with 25% achieving the higher Level 5 in mathematics. Three of the eight pupils in Year 6 who had been identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress similar to their peers. However the school's data shows that standards will nevertheless be below national expectations as a result of their low starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy coming to school and all the enrichment activities offered. They are actively involved in the school community through the school council. For example, they manage budgets and organise fund-raising activities, including a cake stall and a car wash. Pupils contribute effectively to school policies and procedures, such as the recently revised rewards and sanctions

policy and setting their own playground rules. Recently, they planted a 'keyhole garden' in the school grounds. Pupils develop the ability to assess risk through challenging themselves on the outdoor play equipment. Through cycling proficiency, pedestrian training and stranger danger talks, they understand how to keep themselves safe. Healthy lifestyles are clearly understood. The 'Let's get Cooking' and 'Fit for Life' clubs for pupils and parents make a significant contribution to this. Pupils develop satisfactory skills that prepare them for their future lives. Behaviour and relationships are good between pupils and with adults. There are good links with the local community. Pupils have planted troughs of flowers in the local high street and presented a Christmas production to local senior citizens. Pupils have fund-raised to 'Send a Cow' to Uganda but other opportunities for them to develop an understanding of the wider and global communities are underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have established good productive working relationships with pupils which creates a good environment for learning in the classroom. This ensures that pupils stay focused throughout lessons and enjoy learning. Pupils become increasingly confident to work independently or ask for help if needed. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is good and work well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. Though questioning is often effectively used to check pupils' understanding and clarify their thinking, this is not a consistent feature of all lessons. At times, learning outcomes are too vague and pupils unclear about what they were expected to learn, and expectations about what pupils could achieve are not high enough. Tracking of progress is effective. However, assessment information is not always used effectively to ensure that work fully matches learners' needs, particularly in mixed-age classes. Teaching assistants support learning well and provide effective support for individuals and groups of pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. A topic-based curriculum has recently been introduced that engages pupils more effectively in the learning process with the result that pupils enjoy their lessons and make better progress. The school recognises the need to develop creativity in its pupils and activities are often innovative and stimulate pupils to learn, though at times the learning outcome gets lost in the activity. The recent strong emphasis on pupils' personal, social and emotional development is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and relationships. Creativity is now extended to the playground where, during lunchtimes, pupils have access to a range of unusual resources through the 'Play Pod' and outdoor equipment that enhances their play. Consequently, pupils make significant gains in their self-confidence and maturity over their time in school. Through links with the Sports Partnership, out-of-school sports are good and the range of other clubs is good for a school of this size. Enrichment through planned activities, such as 'Ugandan Arts and Sports Weeks' is good and supports pupils' cultural awareness. Use of the extensive school grounds is successfully being developed through the 'Forest School' initiative. However, the school fails to ensure that there are planned opportunities to consistently promote pupils' spiritual awareness. Curriculum workshops, such as 'Keeping up with you Child' and

understanding the reading intervention scheme, have been held recently for parents in order to engage them more fully in their children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There is a high degree of care and support for pupils. Induction processes for young children starting school are good, as is liaison with the pre-school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and the relevant support provided through good links with specialist agencies. Focused intervention groups are used effectively to support the learning of those who may be experiencing difficulties. Well qualified teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are supportive of the school and if difficulties arise are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The recent introduction of a behaviour management system, involving pupils in setting their own rules and involvement in rewards and sanctions, has been effective in improving behaviour throughout the school. Exclusions have significantly reduced. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the higher than average number of pupils who join throughout the school year. Though targets are set in literacy and numeracy so that pupils can monitor their own progress, guidance on how to improve their work through marking and identifying the next steps in learning is not consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has effectively steered the school over the last year through a period of turbulence and has been instrumental in bringing about improvements and raising staff moral. There is a strong team spirit amongst staff who are committed to school improvement. During this period of instability, the school has received good support from the local authority. The school has a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Governors provide effective support to the school and are instrumental in resolving staffing issues and improving attendance. The resolution of staffing issues, improved behaviour and attendance, and better use of tracking information has resulted in pupils making better progress, with the result pupils now in Years 3 to 6 make good progress compared with their starting points. The school has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. The size and fluctuating ability of year groups continue to provide a challenge for the school. The school works well with others to ensure the well-being of its pupils. The provision to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of life in a diverse society is satisfactory. Links with the local community are good and pupils are actively involved with various projects that increase their awareness of the nature of its population and how they can make a contribution. However, knowledge and understanding of national and global communities is underdeveloped.

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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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 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**

8 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longvernal Primary School, Midsomer Norton, BA3 2LP

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and telling us what you really enjoy about your school. We judge that Longvernal is a satisfactory school that has been through a period of change but now has a stable staff. Staff work hard to make sure that you make progress in your learning and personal development. Listed below are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know:

- You all felt that you were making satisfactory progress in your learning and we agree with you.
- You felt that behaviour was much better and you felt safe in school.
- You particularly enjoy all the after school activities and residential visits.

To make your school even better, we have asked the school to do the following:

- Make sure that the work you do in lessons is more closely matched to your current learning needs.
- Make sure at the start of lessons that you understand what the learning objective is and that you know whether you have achieved this by the end of the lesson.
- Develop your understanding of wider and global communities.

Yours faithfully

Judith Goodchild

Lead Inspector