

Larkrise Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123053
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340269
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Esther Grabe-Watson
Headteacher	Mark Chesterton
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Approximately 60% of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, observing all teaching staff. They also saw two assemblies, observed activities before and after school, at break and lunchtimes, and held meetings with staff, governors, pupils and parents and carers. Inspectors looked at plans, policies and the school's tracking of pupils' progress. They also analysed 128 parental questionnaires, 24 staff questionnaires and 19 pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress and achievement of all pupils, in particular that of the more able pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds
- how well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for and make progress
- the extent to which the needs of vulnerable pupils, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language are being met
- how effectively the school is tackling low attendance rates.

Information about the school

The number of pupils who join or leave this larger than average school other than at the usual times is much higher than that normally expected. The proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school operates a unit which contains children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes. The numbers entering the lower end of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, are increasing considerably, despite limited accommodation. The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club. The leadership team has been radically restructured during the last two years. The school has the Equality and Good Practice Award and has had International School status and Healthy Schools status for several years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The leadership has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of its rigorous monitoring. This has led to detailed and realistic development planning and the introduction of a range of strategies which are improving pupils' attainment and progress. There have been several improvements since the previous inspection in the way pupils' targets are set, in the quality of teaching and in monitoring by subject coordinators. These improvements, combined with better pupils' achievement since the 2008 national test results, mean that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement, by continuing to build on these positive trends.

Most parents and carers are very impressed with the school. Typical was the comment of one parent that: 'The school's international status and multicultural intake is a real strength. The teachers are incredibly enthusiastic, approachable and dedicated.' One of the school's strengths is its inclusive nature, which makes pupils feel secure and well supported. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge well below typical expectations. By the time they leave school, at the end of Year 6, those pupils who have been in the school since the beginning of their education leave with standards that are close to the national average, often making good progress, particularly in English. More-able pupils now achieve better than at the time of the previous inspection because teachers have a better understanding of their needs. The high proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times are integrated very well but make satisfactory rather than good progress, often attaining lower standards than pupils who have been in the school longer. All pupils show good personal development, characterised particularly by good behaviour, very good relationships and a strong contribution to the school, local and wider communities. This also results in an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. However, despite the school's success in improving rates of attendance during the past year, it remains below the national average. Along with poor punctuality, low attendance restricts the progress of a very small minority of pupils. Pupils enjoy the recently redesigned curriculum, which promotes a range of learning opportunities, exemplified for example by the work of Years 3 and 4 pupils on Beowulf. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, although there are inconsistencies. While in many lessons the teaching caters well for the varying needs of pupils from a range of backgrounds, in less effective lessons lower expectations result in insufficient pace or challenge. Although pupils have targets for improvement and often know them, teachers make insufficient use of these targets and do not always give sufficiently detailed feedback, so that pupils sometimes do not have clear indicators of how they can improve their work.

Governors are knowledgeable, active and appropriately challenging. They assist senior

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leaders and subject coordinators well in monitoring pupils' progress. The leadership has moved the school forward during the previous 18 months, following a period of some significant underachievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning by:
 - raising teachers' expectations in the classroom of what all pupils can achieve
- Increase pupils' understanding of how they can improve their work by:
 - making better use of targets in everyday teaching and improving the quality of verbal and written feedback.
- Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - building on existing initiatives to encourage parents and carers to ensure better attendance and punctuality, particularly that of the small minority of children and pupils who are persistently late or absent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils behaved very well and had a positive attitude towards learning in lessons observed. Pupils with a range of learning difficulties, ranging from weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills to emotional and behavioural issues, make good progress. This is because of good support both in lessons and from the external agencies which collaborate effectively with the school. Other pupils make satisfactory but improving progress, as reflected in the 2009 test results and in current tracking. This shows that most pupils, particularly those that have been in school since Year 1, are on track to meet appropriately challenging targets. These pupils include the high proportion with English as an additional language. The school's extensive work in the last year to improve attainment in English has paid off, with improved standards of reading and writing. For many pupils these are now close to the national average. Gaps in achievement between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds have been significantly reduced in the past two years. A very small minority of pupils, from a range of backgrounds, have been underachieving, particularly the diminishing number who are frequently absent from school, and these individuals are less well prepared for the next phase of education when they leave the school. The school is aware of this and is successfully tackling this aspect of underachievement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of why a healthy lifestyle is important. There is a good take-up of a range of enrichment activities, such as sports clubs and the after-school club. Pupils are knowledgeable about other cultures and religions, and talk willingly about the school's links with a wide range of schools in other countries. Pupils' obvious willingness to embrace cultural diversity is one of the school's strengths. Pupils are very supportive of each other in school and behave well. They enjoy lively assemblies and the opportunity to act responsibly, for example in the school forum.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally plan well for the range of pupils in their lessons, and communicate the learning intentions well. In the best lessons, teachers encourage their pupils to learn actively, working independently or in small groups. Pupils enjoy this, as seen in a Year 6 lesson in which pupils discussed with each other different styles of writing. Teachers also have good questioning skills. Teaching assistants and volunteer adults provide good support for pupils of varying levels of ability. Sometimes, the teaching and learning are not sufficiently well paced, and pupils are not encouraged to be adequately productive. Also, while teaching is sometimes effective in building on pupils' prior attainment, in other lessons there is little use made of targets and pupils have a limited understanding of how they can move to the next level.

Pupils enjoy the redesigned, story-based curriculum, echoing one parent's description of 'a wonderfully creative and exciting experience'. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to develop more extended writing skills when following up topics. Music has a high profile. Pupils enjoy the residential visits and the clubs such as music and gardening. The school's inclusive nature is reflected well in a good level of individual

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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support, which helps new pupils, especially those with particular learning needs such as a limited command of English, to settle quickly into school routines. There are strong links with a wide range of outside agencies. These links are constantly monitored and extended, contributing to pupils' general sense of well-being, especially of vulnerable pupils. There are also robust procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

A restructured leadership team and the developing role of subject coordinators ensure a shared commitment to school improvement as well as a smooth-running school. The leadership's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and successfully give pupils and parents and carers a strong sense of security. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and the inclusion of a wide range of pupils from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds has resulted in strong social and personal development. An outstanding contribution to community cohesion pervades the school. It is evident in the way pupils work and support each other and contribute to the local community. It is equally evident in the pupils' awareness of what it means to live in multicultural Britain, and their involvement in projects with schools in Asia and Africa. The school makes good use of parents and carers from varied backgrounds, for example in hosting 'international' events, and is working hard to engage those parents and carers who have limited understanding of English or are less confident in being involved in the school. For example, there are workshops to help parents and carers play a more confident part in their children's learning. The school makes very good use of various partnerships: for example to support teachers' professional development through links with local schools. The leadership now tracks and monitors progress rigorously. The success in identifying underachievement and putting support strategies in place for the pupils concerned has been a significant factor in pupils' improved achievement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in all the areas of learning. They join Reception classes with well below average skills and benefit from good teaching, although standards in writing are still considerably below typical expectations for many children when they join Year 1. The attractive and well-equipped outside learning space is used well, along with other resources. For example, parents from varied cultural backgrounds come into school to tell stories. Staff manage behaviour well and have high expectations. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The leadership maintains good links with parents and carers and outside agencies, so that children feel safe and are well integrated in the unit. Parents keep abreast of their children's progress both through informal meetings and parents' and carers' evenings. Progress is tracked carefully, and those children not doing as well as they should get extra support. Children from different backgrounds do equally well, although some do not attend school as often as they should. Day-to-day management is good, and the unit leader has a clear strategy for future improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school. They

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believe that their children enjoy coming to school, and they are very complimentary about how well the school looks after their children. They are particularly appreciative not just of the efforts made to teach basic skills but also the way in which staff are approachable, make the pupils feel secure, and help them to develop as individuals, so giving their children a good start to their education and personal development. A very small minority are less confident that the school deals with instances of misbehaviour effectively, or do not believe that the school takes sufficient account of parental views. While acknowledging that there are these few concerns, the inspection team believes that behaviour is managed well in the great majority of cases, both inside and outside of lessons. Inspectors also believe that the school works hard in many ways to communicate with parents and carers and involve them fully in their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Larkrise Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 128 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 396 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	63	44	34	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	80	62	42	33	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	77	60	46	36	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	52	56	44	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	88	69	37	28	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	52	54	42	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	51	54	42	7	5	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	54	42	54	42	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	51	53	41	6	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	42	53	41	9	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	36	63	49	11	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	70	55	48	38	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	69	32	25	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkrise Primary School, Boundary Brook Road, Oxford OX4 4AN

Thank you for welcoming us in such a friendly way when we visited your school this week. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons and around the school, and also listening to you when you told us about how much you liked the school. Your school gives you a satisfactory education, and an improving one. Many of you are now making more progress in learning English and mathematics than you did up to a year or so ago. We also know that you like the stories you learn in many lessons, and that you enjoy taking part in all the extra activities like music after school. However, a few of you do not attend school nearly as often as you should, and this affects how well you do. We agree with you and your parents and carers when you tell us that you are well looked after, feel safe and behave well. We know from the lessons we saw that your teachers and other staff do their best to help you learn. Your headteacher leads the school well, and has made several improvements since last time your school was inspected. Occasionally, some of you could be doing even better and achieving more in your work. In order to improve the school further, we have asked that:

- you are given more challenging work to help you to learn even better
- your targets are used more in lessons and that you are given more ideas about how you can improve your work
- the school works even harder to make sure that some pupils attend school more regularly and are more punctual, so that you do not fall behind in your work.

You will help your teachers by continuing to be as eager to learn as when we saw you in lessons. Thank you again for such an interesting time in your school.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector

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