

Lenham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118294
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326801
Inspection date	14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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)	192
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	28
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	D Smith
Headteacher	Hilary Parker
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ham Lane Lenham Maidstone ME17 2QG
Telephone number	01622 858260
Fax number	01622 851652

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- The progress pupils make through the school.
- How effectively teaching and learning, the curriculum and academic guidance support pupils' achievement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, analysis of school and nationally published data, school documents, the views of parents, and discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Since the last inspection the school has had significant staffing difficulties, with a number of staff, including the headteacher, having periods of extended leave. During the inspection the deputy headteacher was leading the school as acting headteacher. The majority of children join the school in Reception, the last part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), but a higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school in other year groups. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased year-on-year and is above average, with a few pupils having complex needs. The school runs a breakfast club two days a week. Recent awards include the Healthy School award, and the school holds Activemark and Football Association Link School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lenham Primary is a good school. It provides a good education for its pupils in a calm environment where each pupil is valued and supported. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards in the Year 6 tests because they are taught well and follow a sound curriculum.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Classroom visits show that pupils throughout the school are focused well on their learning. Teachers manage and organise classrooms well and teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and small groups. This helps vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Good up-to-date resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used skilfully to ensure that learning is interesting. Teachers plan activities which engage pupils, although the details of what they are learning are not always clear enough for them to be able to gauge for themselves how successful they have been in understanding new skills. Marking is regular and reminds pupils of what they are able to do, but sometimes opportunities are missed to help them understand what they can do to improve their work further. Older pupils know their targets and find these helpful. The targets set for the school as a whole are challenging and are usually met.

Parents are supportive and appreciative of all that the school offers. One commented, 'We have recommended Lenham Primary School to others.' A few parents expressed some concerns that frequent staffing changes have disrupted their children's learning. The school's data show that progress rates are relatively consistent through the school and pupils make good progress overall. Provisional results show that standards in the 2008 Year 6 tests in English, mathematics and science are above national averages and are similar to previous years. This represents good achievement for pupils from their levels in Year 2. Standards in the Year 2 assessments are broadly in line with national averages, but vary from year-to-year and have shown a slight decline in the last two years because of the differing abilities and needs of each year group. Staff analyse the outcomes of tests and use the information effectively to make changes to their teaching. For example, a current priority is to improve pupils' writing by giving them more opportunities to develop their creative writing skills. Information and communication technology is firmly embedded across the curriculum, and pupils are responding well to a revised teaching programme to develop their computer skills. Pupils are prepared well for their future education. They are proud of the things they do, which is shown, for example, in the serious and effective way school councillors undertake their responsibilities. They participate enthusiastically in a well planned range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' achievements within and beyond the school are applauded, giving them confidence because their efforts are recognised and valued. Pupils contribute well to their local community and enjoy cultural events, such as the recent performance by a visiting harpist. A new personal, social and health education programme promotes pupils' personal development well. Pupils are well behaved and play together in a harmonious atmosphere, and the school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that they develop a good understanding of their role within the school and wider community. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and helping one another, for example, as buddies and mentors. Their understanding of how to lead healthy lives is excellent, partly as a result of the work undertaken to achieve Healthy School status. They feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils are kind to one another and say that bullying is not a problem, but is dealt with quickly when occasional incidents occur. Pupils are taken care of well on a day-to-day basis and guidance is good when additional support is needed. The school is a safe environment because procedures

for safeguarding them are robust. However, although the appropriate checks have been made, the administration of the single central record has not been fully completed so that statutory requirements are not met.

The significant staffing changes in recent years have placed considerable pressure on senior leaders. Parents are positive about the way in which the school is led, commenting particularly on the skilful leadership of the headteacher and deep care she and staff have for the concerns and views of parents and pupils. The good quality, embedded leadership is reflected in the way pupils have maintained standards and achievement, and the calm way staff and pupils are currently coping under the interim leadership of an acting headteacher. Teamwork and a commitment to ensuring that Lenham School remains successful are evident across the whole school. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive and contribute well to strategic decision-making. Staff and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the number of staff changes within a short period of time has adversely affected the school's capacity to drive developments forward at the speed it would have wished. For example, staff recognise that the curriculum requires improvement, but they have not yet made the planned changes to make learning more coherent and relevant for pupils by making better links between subjects and giving pupils more opportunities to learn independently and practise their basic skills within other subjects. Currently, subject leaders are being trained to develop their roles and they are beginning to take greater responsibility for the overall development of their subjects, contributing to the school's good capacity for ongoing improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge levels a little below those expected for their age because a number of children have significant language and communication difficulties. The high level of care and support provided, together with a good focus on children's personal, social and emotional development, helps them to develop very positive attitudes to school and an enthusiasm for learning. For example during a French lesson, there was a real buzz in the room as children used French in role play without being self-conscious. By the end of Reception, children have acquired the knowledge and skills expected for their age and, although their early literacy skills remain below average, in some areas, such as social, physical and creative development, they exceed them. Children share and take turns happily together. The classroom and outdoor area are vibrant and lively, and children are confident in using and looking after their resources. There is an effective balance between activities led by adults and those children choose for themselves. Links with parents and pre-school providers are good and the information gained is used well to plan activities which meet the needs of individual children. The school has identified that children would benefit from being able to enter full-time education earlier and plans are in place to change induction arrangements so that children stay for the full day earlier in their Reception Year than is currently the case. Leadership and management are good and staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the plans to make better links between subjects to increase the opportunities for pupils to learn independently and practise their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Give pupils clearer information about the detail of their learning so that they are more able to evaluate the quality of their own work.

- Ensure that all administrative statutory requirements for safeguarding children are met in full.

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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?	2
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	2

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?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

Dear Children

Inspection of Lenham Primary School, Lenham, ME17 0QG

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed listening to you when you told us about the interesting things you do in school. We agree with you that Lenham School is a good school.

These are some of the best things we found.

- You work hard and make good progress so that you reach standards that prepare you well for secondary school.
- You are taught well and teachers try to make lessons interesting for you.
- You enjoy coming to school and know very well how to stay fit and healthy.
- You behave very well and enjoy helping one another as buddies or mentors.
- You are well cared for and know what to do if there is a problem.
- Adults try hard to make sure that the school improves all the time.

Your school knows what it needs to do to be even better and we agree with your teachers about the most important things to do next.

- Link subjects together to give you more opportunities to practise your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Help you to understand the quality of your own work by giving you more information about exactly what you are learning.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful to hear what they think about the school. We wish everyone at Lenham School well in the future.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Hutchings Lead inspector