

Leigh-upon-Mendip First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123652
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292736
Inspection dates	13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Greenhalgh

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	44
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Colin Horn
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Harry
Date of previous school inspection	13–15 May 2002
School address	Leigh Street Leigh-upon-Mendip Radstock, Somerset, BA3 5QQ
Telephone number	01373 812592
Fax number	01373 812592

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural school. Pupils come from generally favourable social backgrounds with no pupils on the free school meals register. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average as is the attainment on entry. The number of children in each age group ranges from five to ten and the vast majority are White British. There is an independent playgroup on the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, in which children make exceptionally good progress to reach very high standards by the time they leave. In the Reception Year the children settle quickly and make good progress in all areas of their learning to reach levels that are above those expected for their age. When they leave the school at the age of nine they attain levels that are well above the national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Their achievement is excellent. The only area where the school has not done so well has been in the higher levels in writing in national tests at the end of Year 2. However, much has been done by the school to address this issue, and writing standards are particularly high in the present Year 1.

The excellent quality of care, guidance and support given to pupils ensures that their academic progress, personal development and well-being are all outstanding. Pupils take a very active part in the life of the school and the school council has contributed very well to the school's recent improvements. Pupils help on a day-to-day basis around the school and make up their own prayers to begin lunchtimes. The pupils are very aware of living healthily and bring to school a balanced choice of food in their lunchboxes, eat fruit each day and drink water regularly during lessons. They are active physically and are involved in a range of sports and the healthy school award system. The pupils respond very well to the school's emotional intelligence programme. They work very effectively on their own, and in groups, showing very good levels of self-confidence and very good work-life skills. They are keen to be involved in discussions and generally enjoy all aspects of school. This contributes effectively to their very good attitudes to learning. The pupils say there is no bullying in school and that they feel very safe.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding as is the curriculum arranged by the teachers. The organisation of activities in each of the classes is very good and effectively matches the needs of a range of ages and abilities in each class. The relationships between children and adults are extremely good and this gives the pupils the confidence to give of their best. A very good number of visits and events with neighbouring schools enable pupils to receive specialist input on a wide range of topics.

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. There is a well developed school improvement plan which is very effectively monitored to help ensure its success and to try to secure a good work-life balance for staff. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection and is very well placed to sustain its outstanding qualities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing by the end of Year 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well. Good progress is consistently made across each year group so that attainment compared to the national averages at the end of each year group improves. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently above the national averages for the last six years and this is set against attainment on entry that is in line with the national expectation. The gap widens by the end of Year 4. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress in all areas of learning. The school has not, however, compared well over the last six years in terms of the proportions of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in writing by the end of Year 2. This school has implemented a range of initiatives to address this and is now focusing on developing skills in spoken language across all areas of the curriculum to improve the pupils' writing skills. These initiatives have started to be successful, and the attainments of the present Year 1 group are very high compared to the national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They believe that the school is a very happy and safe place to be and that it is free from bullying. They have very good relationships with staff and each other and their behaviour is excellent. The pupils show very good levels of care for each other and the school council was keen to develop the 'friendship stop' in the playground which is used to good effect during break times. The school council has played a very active role in improving the school and they feel that their ideas are taken seriously. Pupils are keen to be involved in the day-to-day organisation of the school helping to take registration and with general classroom management activities. Pupils enjoy their time in school very much. They have a very good understanding of how to eat healthily and to exercise regularly. They make excellent progress in literacy and numeracy skills and make very effective use of information and communication technology to support their work. This was very evident during the pre-school activity session on the computers which was reinforced during a later literacy lesson. The school's emotional intelligence programme is helping to develop other key learning skills and pupils work independently and in pairs and groups very effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers provide excellent learning opportunities for pupils and ensure that their work is effectively planned so that all ages and abilities are well challenged and make good progress year on year. Pupils feel secure in the classroom and are keen to voice views and opinions and to answer questions in detail. Staff and pupils work particularly effectively together on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Teachers also like to ensure that they take account of the way individual children like to learn, and that there is a fun element to the lessons. Pupils respond extremely well to this and thoroughly enjoy these lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum helps to ensure that the pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. It has been strengthened considerably through the additions of French and the media arts. The pupils receive a very broad and balanced experience across all the National Curriculum subjects and in the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. The Reception Year curriculum is well matched to the needs of these children in all areas of learning. The curriculum is well supplemented by additional activities in school and through a range of visits to local areas of interest and strong links with neighbouring schools to broaden provision further. There is a keen focus on the use of spoken language across all subjects, which is successfully serving to raise literacy skills. The school emphasises the importance of personal, social and health education and emotional intelligence, which enables pupils to make excellent progress in their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school ensures that this is a safe place for pupils to be and all child protection requirements are fully met. The school has done much through the healthy schools award to ensure pupils are fully aware of how to live healthy lifestyles and this is well reflected in the pupils' knowledge of healthy living. There is strong support for pupils to develop very good attitudes towards each other and to show high levels of care. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to take an active role in the day-to-day running of the school as well as in school improvement. Assessment procedures are very good and help to ensure pupils make consistently strong academic progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides an excellent role model to others and has built a very effective management team to which governors actively contribute. The school has maintained its high standards by knowing itself well, keeping abreast of change and taking on new ideas. It was modest in giving itself a good overall effectiveness judgement. However, it is aware of some weaknesses in the pupils' writing. As a result, it is focusing on developing the pupils' spoken language to improve their writing capabilities. The school development plan is a very effective tool for well balanced school improvement and identifies effective monitoring procedures for staff. Governors ensure the school is successful in meeting its objectives. At the same time, however, there is a keen realisation of the need to sustain a good work-life balance for staff. The school has excellent relationships with parents who are extremely supportive of the school. The development of excellent relationships with neighbouring schools has also had a significant impact on the school's own effectiveness by providing expertise in different areas of the curriculum. Resources are very well managed and the school's finances are kept in very good order. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection and is very well placed to ensure the outstanding qualities of the school are maintained. The whole effectiveness of the school's aims and objectives can be summed up by one parent's comments: 'The school and staff are very welcoming. Our son loves coming to school and we feel that we are very well supported in helping our child to learn.'

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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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?	1	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision		
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	



14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leigh-upon-Mendip First School, Leigh St, Leigh-upon-Mendip, Somerset BA3 5QQ

Thank you very much for the way you greeted me when I visited your school and for the contributions you made to the inspection through individual discussions and the meeting I had with the school council.

Your school provides you with an outstanding quality of education and excellent teaching. The headteacher has built a school that enables you to make very good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in each of your years in the school. By the time you leave school, standards are well above those expected in schools nationally. The teachers plan activities for you that ensure you are well challenged and you work very hard to ensure you do your best. The activities you are given are also very broad so that you are able to do well across all subjects. Some of you could do better in your writing and I have asked the school to help you to do this.

The school provides you with many excellent opportunities to improve your personal skills such as living healthily, caring for others and contributing to the day-to-day running of the school. You also make very good contributions to how the school improves through your school council. I was particularly impressed with the way you worked on your own and in groups and the relationships you had with each other and with the staff in school.

The headteacher works very well with other staff and the governors to ensure that the school continues to improve. They make sure that they keep a close check on the progress you are making and plan improvements well to move the school forward. The school uses its money very effectively and provides you with the things you need to do well in your work. The school works closely with other schools in the area and this helps to provide you with more good opportunities to do well.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Greenhalgh
Lead inspector