

Laycock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100411
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	395716
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

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	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Mullins
Headteacher	Christina Miles
Date of previous school inspection	November 2007
School address	Laycock Street Upper Street London N1 1SW
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	23–24 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Wotherspoon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lily Evans

Additional inspector

Phillip Minns

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed a total of 25 parts of lessons involving 22 teachers and totalling around 12 hours. In addition, they made some short observations of learning, listened to some pupils read, looked at pupils' work, attended assemblies and observed pupils at play. Inspectors met staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. They looked at a number of school documents including plans for improvement, minutes of meetings and the school's information on pupils' progress and attainment. Inspectors analysed 115 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Laycock Primary School is larger than average. The school serves an area that is ethnically and culturally diverse. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A higher than average proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational supported at school action plus is also higher than average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs, around a fifth, is very high as the school has specially resourced provision within a unit for pupils who are deaf. At present, 68 deaf pupils spend varying amounts of time in the unit and in lessons and activities in the main school according to their needs, some of which are compounded by other needs. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at different times of the year is higher than average. The school met the government's current floor standards in 2011.

The school has a breakfast club and after-school play centre managed by the governing body. The school has recently undergone a programme of rebuilding and refurbishment.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Laycock Primary School is a good school. The wide range of backgrounds, cultures and learning needs represented among the pupils gives this school an unusual and distinctive character. Pupils' differences are celebrated positively and all are valued. The school is not yet outstanding because pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is not as fast as that in Key Stage 2 and some pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- Pupils achieve well during their time in the school. From low starting points they reach broadly average levels of attainment by the age of 11. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is low and pupils have not always made consistently good progress in the past. The rate of progress has picked up this year, especially in writing, but is slower in reading in both Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The unit is very much part of the school. Provision for deaf pupils is well organised and managed so that these pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and make good progress.
- Teaching is typically good. Positive relationships between adults and pupils create an environment that supports learning. The strong focus on speaking and listening helps to develop pupils' vocabulary. Marking and feedback are not entirely consistent across subjects and not all teachers are equally adept at assessing pupils' learning during lessons to identify misconceptions and refocus learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils, especially, are committed to doing well and take pride in their work.
- The headteacher provides a strong lead for the stable, long-serving staff team who, along with well-informed governors, share her commitment to the pupils. Leaders have taken effective action to rectify the unexpected dip in pupils' results in English in 2011; staff performance has been well managed and staff have responded positively by sharing expertise and embracing changes to improve their teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils in Key Stage 1 reach levels of attainment that are closer to the national average by:
 - teaching systematically a programme of phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds) throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that pupils make consistently good progress in reading
 - fine-tuning the way that assessment information is analysed at a strategic level by senior managers so that pupils' various starting points can be used to set more challenging targets for Key Stage 1.
- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - transferring the good practice in marking, feedback and target setting in pupils' writing to other areas of the curriculum so that pupils know how to improve their work and are given time to respond to teachers' feedback
 - ensuring that teachers constantly check pupils' understanding during lessons to clarify misconceptions and modify tasks accordingly.
- Improve attendance rates by working with parents and carers to reduce the level of absence, particularly absence through family holidays.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Overall pupils achieve well. The school's assessment information shows that the majority of pupils make good progress with little difference in the progress made by different groups. The broad picture is one in which children make good progress in the Early Years Foundations Stage, steady progress in Key Stage 1 and accelerated progress in Key Stage 2 to reach broadly average attainment, including in reading. Groups that are vulnerable to underachievement typically attain better results than their counterparts nationally.

Children start Nursery and Reception classes with skills and knowledge at levels lower than typical for their age with a particularly low level of language skills. Many deaf pupils begin school with very limited communication skills. Children make significant gains in their personal, social and emotional development and in learning about the world around them. They start Year 1 ready to learn but early reading skills remain the weakest element with gaps in phonic knowledge which mean they lack the building blocks for making good progress in reading. This weakness is being tackled and staff have benefited from some recent training in teaching phonics which is yet to have a long-term impact.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been low for several years including in reading. The school's current focus on writing and catch-up programmes in reading for groups of pupils in Year 1 is helping to raise attainment. The pupils who read to inspectors are developing confidence in sounding out unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading and teachers foster a love of books and stories. However, the rapid

pace at which pupils in Year 3 have made up ground in reading through a catch-up programme suggests that they could have made more progress in Key Stage 1. The school has successfully addressed the dip in the 2011 results in writing at the end of Key Stage 2. The school's focus on writing is helping pupils to write in different styles, in a range of subjects, and to use more adventurous vocabulary to make their writing interesting for the reader.

The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Pupils in the unit are integrated into mainstream classes to varying degrees depending on their needs. Documented evidence shows that some have made outstanding progress. The focus on language and vocabulary is strong throughout the school and this helps to develop the communication skills of all pupils.

The majority of parents and carers consider their children are making good progress and inspection confirms this. In lessons observed, pupils worked hard, concentrated well, and particularly benefited from opportunities to work in pairs or groups to share their ideas and to learn from each other. The quality of art work around the school, including three-dimensional work, is a significant strength.

Quality of teaching

Significant strengths in the quality of relationships between staff and pupils underpin an atmosphere in classrooms, including in the unit, which is conducive to good learning. Teachers foster in pupils a desire to do well. Pupils respond positively to the incentives to improve their work. A strong focus on developing language skills as well as high expectations and challenging activities are features of most lessons. Opportunities for pupils to work together and to cooperate in pairs or groups are frequent. Just occasionally the pace of lessons dips, especially when teachers do most of the talking. Pupils who need extra help, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are supported well by additional adults. Deaf pupils in mainstream classes have equally high expectations placed on them. Teaching in the unit focuses well on developing oral skills.

In the main, good questioning draws out pupils' discussion, builds on their responses and encourages pupils to explain their thinking. Such strategies were put to effective use in mathematics lessons observed in Years 4, 5 and 6 when the high challenge made pupils think hard. Open-ended tasks gave pupils the opportunity to apply their mathematical learning to solve problems.

By and large, teachers use assessment information well to plan activities that are pitched at a level appropriate to pupils' different learning needs. There is some inconsistency, however, in how well teachers gauge pupils' learning during lessons so that they can intervene in a timely way to modify tasks, clarify misconceptions and put pupils back on track. In the best examples, such as in literacy in Year 4 and Year 5, an effective step-by-step approach enabled specific skills to be taught in small chunks with several opportunities to stop, review understanding, and refocus before continuing.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, with activities that broaden

children's experiences and support them in developing their social skills and independence. In particular, opportunities for creative development are well designed to teach specific skills and let children apply them in a range of open-ended activities. However, the systematic teaching of phonics is at an early stage both here and in Key Stage 1.

The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' writing is particularly effective. Here the structured approach to identifying 'what went well' and 'even better if' is consistent and gives pupils a strong sense of their own learning and what they need to improve, although there is not always enough time to follow up the comments. Plans to extend this structured approach consistently to other subjects are well founded.

Parents and carers have a very positive view of the quality of teaching. Pupils, too, are positive about how their teachers help them. 'No matter what, the teacher will help you' said one and, 'They forgive you if you do something bad' said another. The latter is a clear indication of the positive model teachers provide for pupils' personal development as well as their academic learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in lessons and show a commitment to learning and to doing their best to please their teachers. They move around the three-storey building sensibly and safely. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Pupils generally get on well with each other. They respond positively to the Laycock Code and to the school's systems for rewarding good work, good behaviour and kindness to each other. Exclusions are extremely rare as are incidents of racist behaviour.

The majority of parents and carers are happy that the school deals well with bullying and behaviour although a handful raised some concerns. Inspectors observed some boisterous behaviour at playtimes as pupils let off steam but pupils think the playground is better than it used to be and that behaviour is good overall. Pupils agree that arguments occur at times in the playground but have a mature understanding of the difference between one-off disagreements and persistent bullying, such as name-calling, physical harassment and cyber-bullying. They consider that bullying is rare but dealt with effectively by staff. Records confirm this picture. The school can point to some success stories of pupils whose behaviour has improved through the support of staff. Pupils feel safe in school and know through lessons how to keep safe from harm when out and about and when using the internet.

Attendance rates are improving and closer to average this year but, despite the school's efforts, figures are affected by the numbers taking extended leave abroad as well as a small number of persistent absentees.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, staff and governing body are ambitious for the school and for pupils to achieve as well as they can. Plans for school improvement focus on the right priorities and are based on a systematic approach to monitoring the quality of

provision and of pupils' learning and progress to evaluate what could be better. Leaders responded quickly to the dip in results in writing last year. They looked carefully at how writing is taught and put in place a programme of training for teachers which is already showing signs of accelerating pupils' progress. It is too early to judge the impact of recent training on the teaching of phonics. Nevertheless, the school's record of success in several areas, coupled with a clear vision for the future, shows that there is capacity for sustained improvement.

A comprehensive system to track and analyse pupils' progress identifies where progress may be slipping or where individuals may need more support. Programmes of intervention or modifications to provision are made to ensure all groups have an equal chance to succeed. Well-established links with external agencies help the school to provide support for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement. The analysis of assessment information from the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is not so robust to set challenging targets to increase rates of progress and raise attainment.

The well-informed governing body understands the challenges that face the school; governors support and challenge the school's leaders in equal measure. Statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe and for tackling discrimination are met.

The interesting curriculum meets pupils' needs and broadens their horizons. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Visits, visitors and a variety of clubs add much to pupils' cultural development. Themes such as 'heritage week' and projects on 'our world' celebrate the wide range of backgrounds and cultures represented at the school. They foster in pupils a sense of pride in their own heritage alongside a growing understanding and awareness of the backgrounds of others. An effective balance of specific teaching in the unit and integration in mainstream classes meets the learning and social needs of deaf pupils.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

25 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Laycock Primary School, London N1 1SW

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting some of you, hearing some of you read, and seeing you in your lessons. We listened to what you had to say as well as seeing for ourselves what the school is like. We have judged that your school is good.

A few of your parents and carers had some concerns about behaviour but you told us, and we agree, that nearly everyone behaves well, gets on with each other and that you feel safe. You told us that bullying is rare but that you are confident it is dealt with by the staff. We saw mostly good behaviour.

You are well taught and make good progress during your time in school. By the time you leave, your standards are about the same as those of most pupils in the country. The school's focus on writing is working well but we think that the younger pupils could be doing a bit better in reading. We have asked the teachers to focus more on teaching you about letters and sounds when you are younger so you do not need to catch up so much when you are older.

You told us about your targets and how you know what to improve in your work. We have asked teachers to use WWW and EBI in all their marking because it works really well in helping you to improve your writing. You can help by making sure you always take notice of what they tell you to improve. In lessons, you work hard but are sometimes confused by the tasks. We have asked teachers to always check carefully that you understand what you are learning and to stop and explain again, if necessary.

Your headteacher and her staff team want the best for you, as do the governors. We have asked them to make sure that you make more rapid progress when you are younger. Some of you do not come to school as much as you should and some of you have long family holidays. It is important that you come to school as often as you can, unless you are really ill.

We wish you all the best in the future – keep trying hard to be 'Good as Gold'.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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