

Joy Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135130
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	329031
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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 on roll	
School (total)	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Metcalf
Headteacher	Debra Hines
Date of previous school inspection	None
School address	Joy Lane Whitstable Kent CT5 4LT
Telephone number	01227 261430
Fax number	01227 261572

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It opened in September 2007 bringing together pupils from previously separate infant and junior schools. The large majority of pupils are from White British families. Other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest group being from other White backgrounds. There are twice as many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as in most schools, including pupils from a specialist provision within the school for children with autism. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is exceptionally high. The school opened a Nursery in January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors have worked together well to create a new school in which pupils take a growing pride and where they are making increasing progress. In this well-run school, it is the dynamism of the headteacher and leadership team that have driven through a successive stream of improvements aimed firmly at extending the opportunities available to pupils and raising standards. The school continues to work hard to bring standards up to average levels.

When pupils joined Joy Lane Primary, the standard of their work was low. School leaders set out, as a first step, to establish an attractive and exciting learning environment. Coupled with a curriculum made interesting by focusing not just on building pupils' basic skills, but also on broadening their horizons, this vibrant learning environment has given pupils a greater desire to learn. Parents appreciate these strengths. Staff keep a close track on each pupil's progress, and it is the support put in place for pupils who fall behind that has been a major factor in the good progress that pupils now make. A parent described how their son has 'caught up', and another wrote to say, 'I have found the school very helpful with my son who has had difficulties with reading and writing.' As a result of well-targeted support, pupils achieve well. Progress has accelerated in the last six months. Consequently, standards, which remained low in the school's first year, are now rising. They are currently below average, although the swift progress recorded over the past six months in Year 6 would, if maintained, put standards in line with the national average.

Drawing well on support from the local authority, leaders set out to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Both are now good. Relationships are strong and teachers use questioning successfully to engage the pupils' interest. Where pupils do not progress as fast as they could in lessons, it is because teachers are not matching work closely enough to pupils' different capabilities. School leaders' monitoring has given them a sometimes overly positive view of teaching and learning because they have tended to focus their observations of lessons on the features of the teaching rather than on its impact. School leaders have a nonetheless accurate picture of the school's strengths and of those areas that would benefit from further development. This, and the school's fast growing success in its first 18 months, show Joy Lane's good capacity for further improvement.

Good care, guidance and support have helped to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy at school. This is especially the case for those in the specialist provision for pupils with autism. Despite some shortcomings in the building that houses it, this facility caters very well for its pupils' often complex needs. Many of the parents of children in the provision wrote to commend its work. One reported that their son had 'come on in leaps and bounds' since joining. Another wrote, 'I strongly believe that my son would not be making the progress he is if it were not for this facility. My son is able to access learning in a less distracting, safe and focused way.'

Throughout the school, marking makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress because it gives pupils clear guidance on how to move their work on. Pupils have

targets on the walls in their classes that are intended also to help them to identify the next steps in their learning. However, pupils do not all know and refer to them, in part because the targets are not all written in language that is easily understood.

Key to the school's increasing success is the way it has transformed pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Many pupils joined the school with a track record of unsettled behaviour. The rate of exclusions in the school's first year was very high. It is now much lower and pupils and parents report that behaviour is much improved. Pupils' personal development is good because, as a parent described of their daughter, 'The school has helped her to develop confidence in her own ability'. Another very satisfied parent commented, 'The school is always an inviting place, and the staff are happy and welcoming. My son is proud to be a Joy Lane pupil, singing the school song around the house.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 2**

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because the good quality teaching meets the individual needs of each child. Children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and knowledge below that expected for their ages. They achieve well, reaching standards that are close to average by the start of Year 1. Children do particularly well in their personal and social development, but standards remain lower in communication, language and literacy skills, where attainment was relatively lower when they first started.

Staff carefully monitor and record the progress of the children in the Nursery and Reception, enabling them to plan motivating activities that help children to grow in confidence. The children feel safe and play happily. A parent described how her daughter 'always comes home with a smile. She can't wait to tell me about her day.' The Nursery children were really enthused at the opportunity to hunt for bugs in the grounds. However, work has yet to be completed to equip the outdoor area for the Nursery.

Parents appreciate that staff look after their children and make them feel at home. Good procedures are in place to ensure children's well-being. Appropriate records are kept, for example, of medical conditions. Children enjoy healthy foods at snack time and know to wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet. Parents are fully informed about what their children are doing, from both discussions with staff at the beginning and end of the sessions and through looking at children's learning journals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match work in lessons more closely to pupils' different capabilities.
- Focus leaders' monitoring of lessons on pupils' learning and on the progress they are making.
- Ensure that pupils all understand and routinely make use of their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Because this is a new school, the pupils who took the national tests in 2008 had spent only a part of their primary years at Joy Lane Primary. For example, the Year 6 test results in 2008 relate to pupils who spent Years 1 to 5 in other schools. Pupils joined the school in September 2007 with standards that were low. The changes made over the school's first year or so of operation have had a big impact in accelerating pupils' progress so that standards have risen. Standards are now below average and pupils' achievement is good, preparing them well for the next stage of their education. The many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, including those in the autism provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'My child was very shy when she first started at Joy Lane, but the whole school experience has really brought her out of herself.' This view, from a parent, is typical of many who comment positively on the improvement there has been in pupils' personal development and behaviour. Pupils enjoy school, where they grow in confidence and develop good attitudes to learning. However, they can sometimes be passive in lessons and too dependent on their teachers and support staff, rather than having a go for themselves. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and increasingly treat each other with care and respect. For example, some pupils take on the responsibilities of play leaders to support and help younger children in the playground. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in the school and local community, as school councillors and in their roles on the eco council. This work includes their ongoing investigations into the part of the local beach that they have adopted. Pupils know how to stay safe both in and outside school. They have a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles; even young pupils readily explain what exercise to take to remain fit.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes skilfully, ensuring that pupils behave well and are attentive. They make good use of questioning to draw out pupils' answers and to encourage them to explain their thinking. Often, they direct questions at individual pupils rather than just taking answers from those who put up their hands to volunteer. This helps to ensure that the pupils listen and pay attention. Lessons are otherwise well planned, but work is not always matched closely enough to the range of abilities that there is in each class. Too often, work for pupils of different abilities is distinguished only by the level of support offered, or else more able pupils are just expected to do more of the same work as the others. Teaching assistants are often used very well to support pupils who need extra help with their learning. Sometimes, however, they do too much for the pupils, for example when they, rather than the pupils, record group discussions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Learners particularly enjoy the investigative and problem-solving activities in a curriculum which is stimulating and is motivating them to do well. For instance, pupils in Years 1 and 2 investigated the school environment. As a result, a number of changes were made that improved the school, including changes in the way the library is arranged. Pupils say that they find the use of drama effective in enabling them to have a greater understanding of people's lives and feelings. The naming of each class after a well-known painter or sculptor has raised pupils' awareness of Western art and culture. School leaders recognise that not enough has been done to broaden pupils' experience of other cultures and beliefs, and this has been identified as a priority within the school's action plan. Special events, such as Red Nose Day, which coincided with the inspection, have helped pupils to learn more about different people in Britain and around the world. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of clubs, which are much appreciated by pupils and parents alike.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Clear procedures for child protection, security and risk assessment ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Pupils are helped in their personal development by the good guidance they gain from personal and social education, and all pupils benefit from the integration, with support, of autism provision pupils into mainstream classes. The school's focus on attendance has been aimed at tackling persistent absence. The success of this is evident in the sharp improvement in the previously poor attendance rates. Attendance is now much better, although it is below average. There has been less emphasis on celebrating good attendance. For example, at present, custody of the 'Attendance Ted' is awarded only on a termly basis. Marking generally provides pupils with a good understanding of what to do to improve their work. The individual learning plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities provide clear targets that help them to make good progress. However, other pupils are not all aware of, and do not routinely refer to, the targets that they have on their classroom walls in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, leadership team and governors have created a successful school in a relatively short period of time. They have achieved this by building a team with a shared vision based on raised expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance. They have also worked in close partnership with the local authority and outside agencies, and given priority to taking account of parents' and pupils' views. Much has been done through careful monitoring of pupils' work and progress, although the monitoring of lessons has not always focused sharply enough on how well the pupils are learning. Governors and school leaders are conscious of their duty to raise pupils' awareness of the wider world and faiths and traditions in this country and beyond. The school motto is 'Inspiring the community', and leaders keenly involve pupils in local events and charity fund raising. Links with schools in France and Japan are also helping to broaden pupils' horizons.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	NA
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 is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
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	3
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

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.

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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	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?	2
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	3
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



14 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Joy Lane Primary School, Whitstable CT5 4LT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our time with you and I enjoyed the Red Nose Day assembly as much as you did!

You are rightly proud of your new school. Joy Lane is a good school where you are making good progress so that standards are rising. Your headteacher and all the school leaders and staff have done a great job in creating such an attractive and stimulating learning environment where you have lots of interesting things to do. They have also helped to ensure that children get off to a good start in Reception and in the new Nursery.

Staff take good care of you and keep careful track of how well you are doing so that they can give extra help to those of you who need it. The children in the autism provision are looked after and helped especially well.

We were very pleased to see how much behaviour and attendance have improved over the past year. Well done! The way you get on with each other has helped to make Joy Lane a happy place. The teaching is good, but we have asked teachers to be sure that the work they give you is not too easy or too difficult. We have also asked that when staff come to see each other's lessons, they particularly look out to see how much progress you are making in your learning.

Your teachers' marking gives you lots of tips on how you can improve your work, but not all of you know your targets. We have asked the school to make sure that you all make more use of your targets in the future. That is something you can help with too.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Selwyn Ward', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector