

Leighswood School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131433
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	381341
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Stephen Lake

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	573
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynn Levesley
Headteacher	Duncan Speirs
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 December 2006
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Stephen Lake

Additional inspector

Fiona Chamberlain

Additional inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. A variety of classroom observations were used, some in partnership with a member of the senior staff. Inspectors visited 28 lessons and made a further 25 short focused visits to classrooms. They observed 18 teachers and a nursery nurse. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan and samples of pupils' work. Other documents scrutinised included curriculum planning, documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, records of pupil attainment and progress and records relating to the monitoring of teaching. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils and from 206 parents and carers. They also spoke to some parents at the start of school day.

Information about the school

This school is much larger than most primary schools. It serves mainly the local area. Most of the pupils are White British with only a few from other minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The majority have moderate learning difficulties but some also have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties or are within the autism spectrum. Fewer pupils than average join or leave the school other than at the normal times. The school holds Artsmark Gold, British Council International School and Healthy Schools awards. A breakfast club and after-school care are provided by the on-site children's centre. The performance of the school meets the current floor standard. The headteacher has been in post since September 2011 and all members of the senior leadership team are new to their posts, although not all new to the school.

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

Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils achieve well. Almost all parents and carers would recommend this school to another parent. One summed this up by saying, 'This is a great school with excellent facilities.'
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6 pupils have made good progress, but achievement in mathematics remains below that in reading and writing. Achievement in Years 1 and 2, although satisfactory, is not as strong.
- The quality of teaching is good, although it is stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. New teachers are supported well and given good quality professional development to help develop and improve their skills.
- The stimulating and exciting curriculum provides many high quality opportunities for learning. The Forest School provision and the links with other countries are particularly strong features. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, but opportunities to use mathematics across the curriculum are not as well developed as opportunities to use communication and language skills.
- Pupils behave well and are engaged in lessons. They are kept safe as a result of rigorous safeguarding procedures and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance is above average and improving further as a result of the school's robust actions to reduce absence.
- Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has already forged the new senior leadership team into an effective partnership clearly focused upon making the school even better. Governors support the school well. Together with senior leaders, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use the information effectively to plan school improvement. Rigorous and effective systems to monitor the progress of pupils enable senior leaders and managers to have a clear view of school performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, improve achievement in Years 1 and 2 to match that in the rest of

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the school by:

- ensuring that information on pupils' progress is used more consistently to plan and adapt lessons so that all pupils are challenged to achieve their very best
- ensuring that learning in all lessons proceeds at a brisk pace.
- embedding and monitoring the good strategies put in place to improve attainment in reading and writing.
- By July 2013 improve pupils' achievement in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 to match their performance in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that information on pupils' progress is used more consistently to plan lessons that challenge all pupils, especially the more able
 - providing more opportunities to use and promote mathematics skills across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all pupils think that the school helps them do the best they can for most of the time. Almost all parents and carers think that their children make good progress and children's needs are met well. Inspection evidence shows that pupils make good progress overall to achieve standards in both English and mathematics that are above average at the end of Year 6. However, progress in Years 1 and 2 and the progress of more able pupils in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 are satisfactory.

Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those found in similar schools nationally especially in communication and number skills. They learn well because of stimulating activities and teaching that consistently challenges them to improve their key skills. Themes are central to the work that takes place and form a consistent element of all learning each week. For example, in a good session observed across all classes in Reception, the week's story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff was seen in many activities. Children outside developed their language and creativity well as they made 'yucky' meals for the troll and discussed the content with adults. In the classroom other children were engaged in detailed discussion about what a troll's house would look like as they designed and made a range of homes for the troll. The Forest School environment is used particularly well to stimulate children in all areas of learning. Children especially enjoy sitting around the campfire and describing what they can see.

Learning slows a little in Years 1 and 2 because teaching does not always challenge children well enough. This is improving as a result of the recent strategies put in place to re-enforce pupils' understanding of sounds and letters. Although recent, the impact is starting to be seen and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in writing has been closed. In Years 3 to 6 a strong focus on writing is improving pupils' enthusiasm for writing and the quality of their written work. For example in a good lesson observed, pupils made good progress in improving their sentences by using two adjectives together to provide a strong description and using different types of

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punctuation. Pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged to improve their reading and writing skills and their attainment in reading is above average at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. In mathematics more able pupils are not challenged quite enough. This is why progress is somewhat slower than in English. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good quality targeted support from teaching assistants that ensures they make at least the same progress as other pupils.

Quality of teaching

Almost all pupils and the vast majority of parents and carers think that teaching is good. Inspection evidence confirms this. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to make learning interesting and enjoyable and to provide lessons that stimulate pupils to learn. Teaching assistants work effectively in close partnership with teachers, and all adults have high expectations of how pupils should treat each other and respect each other's views. This ensures lessons are friendly and orderly with all pupils working together in a cohesive manner. Information and communication technology is used well particularly to support learning and motivate pupils. A significant strength of the teaching is the way teachers use the creative curriculum to make lessons meaningful and motivating and to develop the core skills of reading and writing. For example in an outstanding lesson observed pupils developed their key reading and recording skills as they used the internet to research Bulgaria in preparation for the visit of a group of pupils from Bulgaria. This work and the visit of a group from this school to Poland are closely linked to the school's international status. These activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Communication skills are particularly well developed through activities such as this, but less emphasis is given to developing pupils' mathematics skills through other subjects of the curriculum.

Recently introduced new strategies to make learning in reading and writing even more effective are followed consistently across the school, but it is too early to see the full impact in national assessments. A key difference between the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 and the rest of the school is that in too many lessons in Years 1 and 2 the pace of learning is slowed by overlong introductions where pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet. A new marking system is applied consistently. Pupils understand the system well and say that in many lessons it helps them know what to do next to improve their work. Information on pupils' attainment and progress is mostly used effectively to plan lessons matched closely to pupils' needs. This is less effective in Years 1 and 2 and in providing challenge in mathematics for more able pupils in Years 3 to 6. In most lessons, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6, questioning is used effectively. Most adults are skilled at asking questions that not only assess what pupils have understood but challenge them to move on in their learning. This is less consistent in Years 1 and 2. Here, too few opportunities are taken to assess pupils' work during the lesson and where necessary adapt the lesson so that pupils move on more rapidly in their learning.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers believe that behaviour is good and any bullying is dealt with effectively. A large majority of pupils agree that behaviour is good and does not generally disrupt lessons. Inspectors endorse these views. Pupils typically show respect towards others during discussions in lessons; this was a key feature of much of the good learning observed. They demonstrate mature and thoughtful behaviour which contributes greatly to the calm and orderly atmosphere in the school. Pupils show great care and sensitivity to those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, ensuring that they are fully involved in all activities. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently positive with pupils showing a real enthusiasm for learning.

A small minority of pupils, parents and carers felt that lessons were disrupted sometimes and some bullying occurred. Pupils say that any form of bullying is rare but when it happens teachers deal with it well. Inspection evidence shows that a few very challenging pupils occasionally disrupt lunchtimes and learning in a few lessons. However, incidents of poor behaviour are rare, and when they do occur teachers manage the situation very effectively. The school is aware of the need to support and further improve the behaviour of a very small minority and is about to open a 'nurture room' where these pupils can be supported in an environment that meets their needs more closely.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school and parents and carers agree with this. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are safe and have a very good understanding of how to keep safe. The school is particularly vigilant about internet safety and pupils' understanding of this is excellent. Attendance, which was already above average, has improved further recently due to the effective strategies such as prizes for 100% attendance and first day calls to investigate absence when the school has not been informed of a reason.

Leadership and management

The effective governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development and provides strong support to drive school improvement. The leadership skills of the new headteacher and the enthusiasm of the new senior leadership team are evident in the clear ambitious vision of how the school can improve further. The experience of many of the new senior and middle leaders is used to good effect to monitor and support new teachers. The broad, balanced and very well planned curriculum ensures a creative environment that stimulates and promotes good learning. The Artsmark, International School and Healthy Schools awards are good indications that provision is effective. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, work on the local community helps increase pupils' understanding of the older people living around the school. A group of older pupils visit a group of senior citizens and support them every week as an extra-curricular activity. Procedures for safeguarding, especially those for child protection, are robust.

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All training for staff and governors is up to date and good quality policies are closely followed.

The school takes great care to ensure equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination. The progress of all groups, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is monitored frequently. The information gained is used effectively to address any underachievement. Robust systems for recording and analysing data ensure that all leaders and managers, including governors, have accurate information on the school performance. Nevertheless, some of new middle managers have not yet developed secure skills in analysing the data to compare the performance of groups or cohorts against other schools nationally. Strengths of the previous inspection, especially in achievement, pupils' personal development, teaching and curriculum have been maintained and built upon and attendance has improved. This indicates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



10 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leighswood School, Walsall WS8 8HZ

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed talking with you in class and on the playground.

Yours is a good school and improving. You achieve well to attain standards better than those in most schools. Here are a few of the things that we particularly liked.

- You get a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the exciting activities and good teaching.
- You achieve well because of the good teaching you receive.
- We agree with you that the school looks after you well and helps you understand how to stay safe especially when you are using the internet.
- The school works very hard to make your learning enjoyable through a very exciting and creative curriculum. We particularly liked the Forest School and the links you have with other countries.
- Your good behaviour and positive attitudes make the school an enjoyable place in which to learn.
- Your school is led and managed well and all leaders and managers, including the governors, are working hard to make the school even better.

In order to help you learn even more effectively we have asked the school to do the following.

- Make sure that all the good ways the staff have introduced to help you to improve your reading and writing are followed in all lessons in Years 1 and 2. You can help by continuing to do your best to become good writers.
- Improve the progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 for those of you who find learning easy, so that it matches the progress that you make in reading and writing. You can help by always trying to do even better in mathematics lessons.

Thank you again for making us so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake
Lead inspector

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