

Larkfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104887
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	355653
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Rowland

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Clarke
Headteacher	Mr Julian Ward
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons and observed the work of 11 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They evaluated the school's work, and looked at relevant policies, the school improvement plan, records of meetings, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. The 98 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How effectively does the school ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential?
- How well do the school's systems for assessment help to support pupils' progress?
- How well does the school ensure consistently stimulating and engaging teaching?
- Do leaders and managers at all levels evaluate their own work and contribute to the development of the school?
- What contribution does outdoor provision make to children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Information about the school

This is a slightly above-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. A small but growing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average and a very small minority of pupils has a statement of special educational needs.

The school hosts a resourced provision for pupils with physical and medical needs.

Since the time of the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.

The school has the Activemark, Healthy School status and the International Schools award.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Following a period of transition, the school has a clear sense of purpose and direction. The new headteacher and all staff and the governing body share a commitment to improving the school further. It provides a safe and caring environment with a family feeling. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and thorough. It forms the basis of an action plan, which sets out what the school needs to do to improve further. The measures taken to improve attendance, for example, have been effective. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. This, along with the good outcomes it has achieved, indicates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. Achievement throughout the school has continued to improve as a consequence. The school's systems for assessment are effective but there are occasions when teachers do not involve pupils enough in talking about their own learning and progress. Occasionally, teachers take too long introducing a lesson so that pupils' interest wanes. Pupils do not then have enough time to check on their understanding and so see what the next steps are in their learning. Nevertheless, almost all teaching is good and pupils make at least good progress. The school's good curriculum provides well for the needs of all pupils and offers a solid grounding in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Behaviour is good and pupils respect each other and adults. The school functions very well as a community, and newcomers and visitors are made to feel welcome. The school has adopted a number of strategies to promote community cohesion but has not yet fully evaluated their impact. Therefore, it is not clear as to what works well and what could be improved. The school is well thought of by parents and carers. This factor contributes significantly to the school's achievements and places it in a strong position to develop further. This good relationship is reflected in the many positive comments received during the inspection. Typical of these is, 'In every aspect the school has helped my son to be the happy, intelligent boy he is today.'

Pupils enjoy coming to school as indicated by their above-average attendance. They made many positive comments to inspectors. A typical comment was, 'This is the best school in the world. I would recommend it to anyone.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of good teaching further, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to discuss and share their learning with peers

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- ensuring that a brisk and business-like pace is maintained
- ensuring that time is provided to check on understanding and to consolidate learning.
- Ensure that the impact of the school's strategies to promote community cohesion are fully evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy school and are willing to try hard and to help each other. They appreciate the variety of tasks and activities they are offered. Consequently, they make good progress. Those pupils with physical and medical needs are well supported and make good progress in line with their peers.

Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Pupils reach above-average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in English and mathematics improved significantly in 2010 following a dip in 2009. This was due to the success of the school's work in establishing good practice in teaching and assessment. Evidence from the school's thorough tracking system, lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils are making good progress and are generally meeting the ambitious targets set for them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the effective support provided for them.

Pupils demonstrate an awareness of how to act safely. They say they feel secure in school and are confident that any concerns will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This is fully supported by parents and carers. The broad range of physical education and sporting activities offered by the school makes a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. There is an effective school council which has contributed to school improvement, for example through its support for the school's reward system, the 'Golden Ticket.' Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in school and this helps them to develop the work place skills they will need. The school sponsors children in a school in Senegal and locally the choir takes part in charitable fund raising activities at a local supermarket. Attendance is above average and pupils are keen to point out how much they enjoy school. The respect and consideration that pupils show to others demonstrates their very good social and moral awareness.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. In the very best lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and pupils are fully engaged. Pupils are given many chances to work as a whole class and in small groups or pairs so that progress is rapid. In one excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, very good planning enabled pupils to move forward at an impressive pace through a variety of activities to understand the concept of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. On the very few occasions when teaching and progress are not as strong, the teacher tends to lead the lesson for too much of the time. As a result, the pace of learning is not as good. The school has developed an effective process for tracking pupils' progress. This provides very useful information, which is allowing the school to plan carefully to ensure that each pupil achieves their potential.

The curriculum offers a good grounding in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Information and communication technology skills are developed systematically. Close links with a neighbouring sports college have helped the school to offer an extensive range of extra-curricular sporting activities. The school is developing a theme based curriculum, which is intended to encourage pupils to use their basic skills flexibly and well across subjects. The benefits of this are beginning to be felt.

Pupils are cared for well and the most vulnerable are assessed carefully and are provided with programmes of support. The school has begun to evaluate the impact of these

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interventions more rigorously. Transition into the school from nursery and pre-school settings is smooth, as is the move to the local high school. The school works effectively to try to improve the above average-attendance rates.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The newly appointed headteacher has made a good start in focussing the work of the school and in encouraging a sense of confidence and purpose. He is trusted and respected by staff and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. This core team is experienced and highly committed to serving the school. Other members of staff, including those with posts of responsibility, share this determination to secure improvement and speak about a strong team spirit. Teaching is monitored well and good practice is shared so that standards can improve. Planning for improvement is good, evident in the rise in attainment in 2010. The school is well served by an experienced and highly committed governing body. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and are well aware of its priorities for improvement. They are developing a more active role in the life of the school by forming links between individual governors and subject areas. They fulfil their statutory obligations.

Partnerships with local schools and other agencies help the school to secure good learning and care for its pupils. Three other schools share the site and all work closely with Larkfield to share resources and activities. Relationships with parents and carers are good and their views are listened to and acted upon. This is a welcoming school and the increasing numbers of pupils of East European origins are made to feel at home. There is no discrimination at Larkfield. The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe in school and all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. They are reviewed and up-dated regularly. The school works well as a community and has links with schools in other countries. However, although an audit of the school's strategies to promote community cohesion has taken place, the effectiveness of these have yet to be fully evaluated.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy learning and make good progress. They achieve well and enter Year 1 with the skills and dispositions they need to be successful learners. They manage small tasks well and are happy to take on responsibilities for themselves. They learn to share and develop a good understanding about how to keep themselves and others safe. They welcome others, including those whose first language is not English. Learning is fun and there is an appropriate mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children learn about healthy lifestyles and how important it is to eat the right food and to wash their hands before handling food.

The learning environment both indoors and out is very well equipped. Observations are taken carefully and these help to formulate future learning. Children are assessed on entry to the Reception class and when they move into Year 1. This process of recording and tracking progress provides useful information to further pupils' learning. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are good and staff work closely as a team to secure a warm and stimulating environment. Some classes are mixed Reception and Year 1; resources and spaces are shared. Partnerships with parents and carers are close. There are many opportunities for the school staff to share information with parents and carers about their children's learning. Staff work closely as a team and are constantly evaluating their work and seeking ways to improve it further. They are appropriately trained and have the required skills and experience to ensure that children stay safe and make good progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

About 35% of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of the responses were entirely positive with some very supportive comments. A small minority of the respondents felt that the school did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. Comments from some parents and carers and from a minority of pupils suggested that this concern related to behaviour in the playground. The school is aware of these concerns and has taken action to strengthen outdoor supervision during breaks and lunchtime. Observations during the inspection show that behaviour both inside and out is good. Pupils stated firmly that they believed that any problems were dealt with promptly and effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Larkfield Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 278 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	74	24	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	69	28	29	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	44	48	49	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	50	44	45	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	60	35	36	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	48	44	45	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	53	43	44	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	49	50	42	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	54	38	39	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	38	44	45	8	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	45	46	47	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	56	41	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	63	33	34	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkfield Primary School, Southport, PR9 8PA

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome during our recent visit to Larkfield. We are particularly grateful to those of you who agreed to meet with us during your lunchtime; your comments were very useful. Thank you also to those of you who completed the questionnaire.

Larkfield is a good school with strong areas. We were impressed by how well you welcome newcomers and visitors into your school. You clearly enjoy your lessons and your attendance is good and improving. The way that you participate in physical education and other sports is very pleasing to see. Your parents and carers had many good things to say about the school. Clearly, you are well thought of in your local community.

You make good progress in your lessons. We have suggested some things which could make it even better. We have asked that you be given more opportunities to talk about your work with your class mates. We have also asked that there be regular times built into lessons for you to check on what you have understood and to think about the next step in your learning. We know that the school has thought of ways to help you learn about other religions and cultures in this country. We have asked the school to see which of these activities has helped you most in your learning.

You are proud rightly proud of your school. Please help your teachers by always behaving as well as you did during our visit, by trying your best to learn and by helping each other. Once again, many thanks for your kindness and help.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stephen Rowland

Lead Inspector

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