

Lostock Gralam CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111289
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	378269
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Dean
Headteacher	Gill Barker(Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	06 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed nine lessons involving five teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, a member of staff from the local high school and informally with a group of parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' attainment and progress and improvement-planning. Fifty-five parental questionnaire responses were analysed as well as those returned by staff and Key Stage 2 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the significant improvement in Key Stage 2 pupils' performance evident in the academic year 2010-2011 has continued and is sustainable.
- How well teachers use assessment to support pupils' learning and to promote progress.
- The degree to which middle leaders contribute to school improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. An average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Of those from minority ethnic backgrounds, a larger proportion than average speaks English as an additional language. An average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has gained awards in recognition of its promotion of a healthy lifestyle, arts and sport. The breakfast- and after-school clubs available to pupils are run by a private provider and this provision is subject to a separate inspection. Since September 2010, the school has been led by an acting headteacher.

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. Under the calm, perceptive and determined leadership of the acting headteacher, the school has overcome a dip in its performance and now ensures that pupils' attainment is above average by Year 6 and that pupils make good progress overall. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Pupils' adoption of a healthy lifestyle is excellent; pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local communities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school's outstanding promotion of community cohesion, its excellent engagement with parents and carers and its highly-effective use of a range of partnerships, all contribute significantly to the good quality of pupils' learning and to their considerable well-being.

Pupils enjoy learning because they are well-taught and have a curriculum that meets their needs effectively and is considerably enriched by a wide range of memorable experiences. Although attainment in English overall is above average, pupils' standards and progress in writing are less strong than in reading.

The excellent quality of the care, guidance and support results in pupils feeling safe, behaving and attending well, and in pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language progressing as well as their peers.

The acting headteacher has carried out a rigorous and accurate root and branch review of the school's performance and provision. Leaders, together with the governing body and with the keen support of all staff, have taken very effective action to strengthen areas of weakness. This has resulted in a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and in the curriculum that has resulted in pupils' much higher attainment and better achievement. There is a pragmatic realisation that subject leaders, despite their current overall effective contribution, could be even more effectively involved in supporting colleagues in the classroom and in further promoting whole-school priorities. The notable improvements over the past year and the clear evidence of their sustainability indicate a good capacity for the school to continue to move forwards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further and accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - improving pupils' use of punctuation and their ability to write meaningful complex sentences
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to rehearse their writing through speaking.
- Enhance the impact of subject leaders on school improvement by providing them with more opportunities to:
 - mentor their colleagues in classrooms
 - be involved in promoting whole-school priorities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and they achieve well. In the classroom, pupils invariably settle quickly to their work, are keen to succeed and willingly contribute ideas and respond to questions. They are knowledgeable about what they need to do to improve, and indicate in their work where they have responded to teachers' advice and instructions. They happily co-operate in learning, peer assessment, sharing ideas in pairs or in groups, and warmly congratulate their classmates on particularly good work. All these positive attributes were evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson in which pupils worked extremely effectively together to solve mental mathematics problems and then knuckled down to define the different properties of quadrilaterals. The supportive atmosphere meant that all were enabled to make a contribution.

Children enter the Reception class with overall skills that are below those expected for their age. Pupils go on to achieve well and leave Year 6 with above-average attainment. Their progress and attainment in mathematics is particularly strong. Some relative weaknesses in their ability to use punctuation correctly and in writing meaningful complex sentences mean that their attainment in writing is lower than in reading. The pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because their needs are rapidly identified and interventions and support for them are effective.

Pupils have very positive attitudes, get on well together, and are happy and feel safe in school. This manifests itself in their above-average attendance and willingness to take on responsibilities and to contribute very effectively to the smooth running of the school and to local community projects, particularly those connected with the church. They enjoy participating in decision-making through the active school council and gain good knowledge of career opportunities and of the economic realities of life through contacts with local businesses. Hence, they are well-prepared for their lives after primary school. Their very obvious desire to see fair play, effective social skills, extremely clear awareness of cultural diversity and their deep sense of spirituality, all reflect the school's denominational nature. Pupils eat healthily, participate in regular exercise and respond extremely well to the school's promotion of health and safety.

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Features of good teaching are effective planning, resulting from accurate assessments of pupils' learning, and very positive relationships that ensure that pupils enjoy lessons and are confident learners. In the very best lessons, pupils are challenged by the highest of expectations, learning proceeds rapidly, no time is wasted and lesson objectives are clear and reviewed regularly. A feature of the improved teaching is the degree to which pupils are encouraged to actively participate in learning, to investigate and to be involved in assessing their own and others' work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most provide helpful advice, let pupils know at what standard they are currently working and how to reach the next level. Although improving, the school acknowledges that teachers are still insufficiently providing pupils with opportunities to rehearse their writing through oral work to develop the vocabulary and phrasing that they will subsequently write.

The good curriculum has some outstanding features. The degree to which the pupils are made aware of the heritage and geography of their local area, and their involvement in planning the curriculum, is commendable. Basic skills, albeit not as strongly in writing as in other subjects, and pupils' personal development are well-promoted. There is a wide range of out-of-class activities that add considerably to pupils' experience, as do relevant visits and interesting visitors. Residential in three different year groups contribute significantly to building pupils' self-confidence and independence. Outside providers, for example, for various sports, promote pupils' physical development and music has a high profile in the school.

Pupils are looked after and supported extremely effectively. Staff know pupils and their families very well and this contributes significantly to the confidence which parents and carers have in the school, pupils' above-average attendance and the good achievement of all groups of pupils. Staff work very closely with outside agencies for the benefit of all pupils but especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, speak English as an additional language or whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable than most. Highly-

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

effective procedures for transition and transfer mean that pupils enter and leave the school with the minimum of fuss or anxiety.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has put the school's performance under intense scrutiny, provided staff and the governing body with a clear vision for the future and ensured that effective plans for improvement have been successfully implemented. The result has been a dramatic reversal of the previous decline. Other leaders and managers and staff have enthusiastically embraced change by promoting pupils' higher attainment, engaging in training in order to hone their skills, and by taking more individual responsibility for the progress made by pupils. There is an acknowledgement that subject leaders could be more effective in coaching colleagues and in promoting whole-school priorities.

The significant improvements evident over the last year have also been assisted by the excellent partnerships established with the church, other schools, the local authority and other external providers. The school has also worked very effectively to engage more closely with parents and carers in supporting the school's work and their children's learning. The homework log and parents' forum have proved very successful in this respect. The governing body is challenging and supportive in equal measure. Individual members follow a year group through the school and link with the school council to represent the pupils' views. They participate in setting school improvement priorities, in conjunction with staff, but acknowledge that they still need to bring more rigour to their evaluation of the success of the actions put in place to achieve improvements. They carry out their statutory duties fully, including ensuring good safeguarding procedures. The latter is evident in pupils' keen awareness of safety issues, which is reinforced by close partnerships with members of the emergency services. All staff are well-trained in child protection procedures.

The school's system to track pupils' progress and procedures for intervening to head off any underachievement have contributed well to ensuring the good promotion of equal opportunities. The excellent promotion of community cohesion is evident in the harmony of the school and in pupils' involvement with the local community. For example, pupils were looking forward immensely to the day following the inspection when they were going to entertain their grandparents with a range of activities. In addition, pupils have links with other schools in communities very different from their own, for example in Stoke and in South Africa. The school's effective evaluation of these links indicates that they give pupils first-hand awareness of the richness of diverse cultures and enhance their cultural development outstandingly well. Pupils' good outcomes, the school's effective use of resources and smooth day-to-day management, indicate good value for money.

These are the grades for the 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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress from their starting points as a result of effective provision and experienced leadership. The sensitive induction procedures ensure that children transfer from various pre-school settings with the minimum of fuss and settle in quickly. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the help they are given to support their children's learning and the way in which their children are looked after. Adults provide an appropriate balance between directing learning and letting children find out for themselves. For example, the children were charged with the task of recreating the story of Goldilocks and Three Bears by building the house and its furniture, laying out the forest path, creating a musical accompaniment with untuned instruments and making puppet characters. They did this with much enthusiasm, choosing materials, instruments and media. The whole activity was completed by children telling the story in their own words, both orally and in writing. Such opportunities to develop language, however, are not always as evident because on occasion, adults ask questions that require very short answers. Children's progress is carefully tracked and key development carefully annotated in their learning journals. The setting is led well with adults working effectively as a team and with a clear understanding of where improvement is still required.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a higher response than normal for primary schools to the questionnaire. The vast majority of these responses was wholly positive about the school with 100% of respondents agreeing that they were happy with their children's experience at school, that teaching was good, that their children were encouraged to lead a

healthy lifestyle and prepared well for the future. Of the tiny proportion of parents and carers who had a concern about an aspect of the school's work, no evident pattern emerged and the main body of the report makes a judgement about any area of concern expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lostock Gralam CofE 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 inspector received 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 129 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	75	12	22	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	76	11	20	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	58	18	33	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	55	20	36	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	65	15	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	65	16	29	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	60	21	38	0	0	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)	25	45	26	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	53	23	42	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	64	15	27	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	65	15	27	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	36	65	16	29	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	71	13	24	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lostock Gralam CofE Primary School, Northwich, CW9 7PT

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to those pupils who gave up their time to chat with us about the school.

You go to a good school. There are some things that are excellent. You are extremely well looked after and supported. You lead very healthy lifestyles, make an outstanding contribution to school and to your local community. I know how much you were looking forward to 'grandparents' day'. I expect it went really well. You have a fine sense of fair play, are polite and behave well and have an excellent awareness of how different communities live. Your assembly showed me that you have a lovely understanding of prayer and kindness. You are well-taught and have lots of interesting things to do in and out of lessons. The school includes your parents and carers very well in all it does and works extremely well with other organisations to help with your learning and to support you.

The adults who run the school have done very well in helping you to reach higher standards and to make better progress. However, it is part of my job to suggest ways that the school can be even better. I have asked the headteacher and the governing body to help you all to have higher attainment and to make even better progress in writing, and for those teachers who look after subjects to be more involved in helping other teachers and in making the whole school even better for you.

Thank you all again for your welcome and you can all do your part by doing your very best every day.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Bamber
Lead Inspector

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