

Lowdham CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122806
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380539
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Vickery
Headteacher	Heather Rattenberry
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons or part lessons, taught by nine different teachers. The inspection team examined the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. They held discussions with the headteacher, the staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers and pupils. The inspectors analysed 105 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 103 from Key Stage 2 pupils and 18 from staff.

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

- How well are different groups of pupils progressing in Key Stage 1?
- How well are pupils applying and developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum?
- To what extent are pupils acquiring and applying the more advanced skills of thinking, problem solving and independent study?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The headteacher was appointed soon after the last inspection in September 2007. A number of awards have been gained including Eco Schools and International Schools. Breakfast and after-school provision is managed by the school and governing body.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Lowdham Church of England Primary is an outstanding school. Highly effective leadership and strong teamwork among the staff have maintained and built upon the strengths identified in the previous inspection. Parents and carers are very pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Their comments included, 'A wonderful school that I cannot praise enough', 'Extremely happy with the school', 'Very impressed with the school, our children are truly valued', 'The headteacher and staff are excellent' and 'Fantastic school'.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well because of outstanding teaching and an exciting curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make exceptional progress in most areas of learning. Outstanding progress continues through Key Stages 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 6, attainment is high in English and mathematics. Lively and stimulating teaching promotes enjoyment and powerful learning for pupils. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and convey high expectations of learning and behaviour. Pupils benefit from skilful explanations, demonstrations and questioning. Assessment is used extremely well to plan teaching and to provide challenging and exciting tasks which are well matched to pupils' abilities. In a few lessons, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to assess and review their own progress or to plan and organise their work independently.

Outstanding care, guidance and support and the very positive school ethos make a considerable contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Pupils are highly motivated learners who thoroughly enjoy school. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well and pupils make exceptional progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is mostly exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel very safe and show an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They willingly take on additional responsibilities and make very valuable contributions to the school and to the wider community. Attendance is high and pupils are extremely well prepared for their next school.

The headteacher, assistant headteachers and staff are firmly focused on promoting high-quality provision, high attainment and outstanding progress so that all pupils are able to do as well as they can. There are outstanding partnerships with other agencies to promote pupils' learning and development. Through systematic self-evaluation, the school knows its strengths and takes positive action to bring about improvements where needed. Since the previous inspection, the school's

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effectiveness has moved forward from good to outstanding. The school demonstrates an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in all lessons, pupils have sufficient opportunities to:
 - assess and review their own learning
 - plan and organise their work independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and understanding broadly in line with expectations for their age. Throughout the school, pupils show considerable enthusiasm for learning and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of activities provided. They told the inspectors, 'We learn different things every day' and 'We learn and socialise with our friends'. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress. There is very well targeted support for pupils who need it. Skilful teaching and challenging tasks ensure that the most able are extended. By the end of Year 6, it is evident from assessments, the lessons seen and pupils' work that attainment is high in reading, writing and mathematics.

By Year 6, pupils are articulate and confident speakers who possess a wide vocabulary. They apply their speaking and listening skills extremely well in the well-planned discussion opportunities provided. Pupils share their learning and express their ideas and opinions clearly. They are avid readers and enjoy the wide range of books available. Pupils write lively and imaginative pieces for a range of purposes and in different styles. Their writing is accurate, imaginative and well presented. After being inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm, explanations and modelling, Year 6 pupils planned and wrote a well-balanced argument on whether money should be spent on space exploration in difficult economic times. They used facts, opinion, third person and sign-posting successfully in their writing. Pupils apply and develop their writing skills very well in other subjects. Year 4 pupils wrote interesting and informative recounts of their visit to an environmental studies centre and of the 'planetarium' that came to school.

Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics because of the exciting practical problem-solving approaches provided. In a successful Year 2 lesson, pupils made excellent progress in estimating and measuring the height of different toys. Information and communication technology skills are used confidently by pupils to support their learning. For example, Year 5 used a range of websites to research information about planets. In producing their own 'blogs', they included useful hyperlinks to various sites. In science, they work well together in planning and carrying out investigations. They apply measuring skills accurately and know how to make their tests fair. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to decide how best to record and present their results. Year 6 pupils were fully engaged

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and enthralled as they designed and made model aliens. The ‘creatures’ had impressive moving parts through the imaginative use of pneumatics.

Pupils demonstrate very positive qualities such as cooperation, kindness, respect for others and responsibility. First-rate team work contributes exceptionally well to their collaborative learning. Through the curriculum and international links with South Africa and France, pupils gain a very clear understanding of different cultures and faiths. They feel extremely well cared for at school and know that there are always adults they can turn to for help if needed. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities. Those on the school council, the eco team, young leaders and playground friends all take their roles seriously. The choir performs in the local and wider community. Pupils raise funds for a wide range of appeals and charities to help those who are less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next school because, by the time they leave, they possess highly developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and their personal and social skills are particularly good.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is a great strength and a major factor contributing to the school’s success. Pupils told inspectors, ‘Teachers make learning fun’, and ‘Teachers are always there to help us’. Strong subject knowledge, high expectations and challenging activities lead to exceptional gains in learning. Teachers create attractive classrooms and a very positive climate for learning. Lessons have a clear purpose

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

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and so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Specific success criteria are provided to guide pupils’ learning and help them to assess their own progress. Interactive whiteboard technology is used exceptionally well to illustrate key teaching and learning points. Skilful questioning challenges pupils’ thinking and checks their understanding. Pupils are inspired and motivated because of challenging and interesting tasks that are well matched to their abilities and needs. Lessons maintain a brisk pace and pupils are actively involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are very effectively deployed and make valuable contributions to pupils’ learning. The marking of pupils’ work is thorough, positive and helpful

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff have successfully created a very positive school ethos where pupils thrive in their learning and personal development. Staff demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and strive to provide high-quality provision. Their success can be seen in the outstanding outcomes for all pupils. Leaders and staff place considerable emphasis on developing high-quality teaching. The monitoring of lessons by senior staff and the sharing of practice has led to teaching being consistently strong across the school.

Members of the governing body show a very good understanding of the school’s strengths and improvement priorities. They are supportive and provide constructive challenge to hold the school to account. Safeguarding is given good emphasis and there are effective policies and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of these procedures are thorough. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. Safe practices for pupils are successfully promoted through the school’s teaching and curriculum.

Equality of opportunity is promoted extremely well and discrimination is very effectively tackled. All pupils have full access to the high-quality provision and this enables all groups to make outstanding progress. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well and there is strong international dimension to the school’s curriculum. As a result, pupils have an appreciation and a very clear understanding of life in the global world.

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An innovative curriculum successfully promotes outstanding progress and high attainment for pupils. It also contributes extremely well to their personal development. Exciting and memorable learning experiences are provided for all pupils. Strong links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils’ learning. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in a range of areas. Health education and the wide range of physical activities provided contribute extremely well to pupils’ excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of clubs, including athletics, choir, drama, football and rugby. Visitors and visits further enhance the curriculum and pupils’ learning.

High-quality care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school’s very positive ethos. Pupils, parents and carers fully appreciate the well-organised, safe and secure environment provided. Relationships between adults and pupils are outstanding. A parent commented, ‘Staff are consistently caring, understanding and firm; always professional and give their best for the children’. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with outstanding support. In partnership with other agencies, the school is highly successful in supporting pupils and their families who require additional help. The robust monitoring and promotion of attendance contributes to high attendance. Many children take advantage of the school’s very well organised breakfast and after-school provision.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Very effective leadership and planning underpin the outstanding provision. Children settle quickly because of effective induction arrangements and the strong partnership with parents and carers. They make excellent progress in their personal, social and

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emotional development because of the very positive relationships they enjoy with adults and the considerable attention staff pay to their care, guidance and welfare. Children grow in confidence and feel extremely safe and secure. They relate very well to others and their behaviour is exemplary.

Children thoroughly enjoy the indoor and outdoor activities provided. They are extremely well taught and make outstanding gains in their learning. Assessment information is used accurately to plan teaching and learning. There is a successful balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have plenty of opportunities to explore, be creative and work independently. They make very good gains in communication and language because these skills are promoted through all activities. The teaching of letters and their sounds receives a clear emphasis and children make very good progress in this area. They enjoy the attractive and interesting books available. There is a wide range of opportunities for them to acquire and practise their early writing skills. Children’s attainment in writing is higher than expected for their age. They use information and communication technology with confidence to support their learning in areas such as counting and calculation. In the topic, ‘Noah’s Ark’ children had great fun in exploring colours and painting rainbows.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The inspection team received a higher than usual response to the questionnaire. Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with their children’s experience at the school. They are particularly pleased with the sense of enjoyment, safety in the school, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, teaching and how the school helps them to support their children’s learning. The inspection findings support these very positive views. The results of this survey indicate that parents’ and carers’ concerns about the school are very few. A very small minority do not feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that it does not meet their children’s particular needs. During the inspection, pupils’ behaviour was extremely positive and inspectors found that there are effective procedures to deal with any inappropriate behaviour should it occur. The school strives to meet the needs of all pupils and most pupils are making outstanding progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lowdham 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 inspection team received 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	77	24	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	72	27	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	52	50	49	47	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	58	36	34	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	66	63	32	30	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	64	61	35	33	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	70	29	28	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)	64	61	30	29	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	63	60	34	32	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	41	45	43	9	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	48	43	41	4	4	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	54	51	41	39	5	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	71	68	30	29	3	3	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 are 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.



23 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowdham CofE Primary School, Nottingham, NG14 7BE

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school, giving us your views and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. Lowdham Church of England is an outstanding primary school. These are the main strengths.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance level is high.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress.
- In Years 1 to 6, you make outstanding progress because of the first-class teaching you receive.
- Standards by the end of Year 6 are high in English and mathematics.
- An exciting and wide range of learning activities is provided including clubs, visits and visitors.
- You get on extremely well with each other and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You feel extremely safe at school because teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and provide outstanding guidance and support.
- You make very valuable contributions to school life and to the wider community.
- The school is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher. She receives very good support from other key leaders.

We have given your school just a few points for improvement.

- In a few lessons, you could be given more opportunities to assess your own progress and to plan and organise your own work.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts
Lead inspector

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