

Pontefract Larks Hill Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108188
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	377711
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jennifer Platt

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Allinson
Headteacher	Alison Smith
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt
Lindsay Hall

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and parts of lessons taught by teachers and led by teaching assistants. Pupils from different year groups read to inspectors. Inspectors scrutinised the work of pupils in their books with a focus on writing and mathematics. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and members of the senior management team. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at many documents including the school development plan, records on safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and pupils' progress data. A few parents and carers shared their views of the school informally with the inspectors as they accompanied their children to school. Inspectors examined questionnaire responses from pupils and staff as well as 85 completed by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are White British heritage. The number of pupils supported by school action plus is above average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standards, which sets the minimum standards expected by the government for attainment and progress. The school has received Eco Green Flag Award, Healthy School status, Artsmark, Active School Award and has International school status. In 2011 Larks Hill became a Foundation School becoming a member of Pontefract Education Trust which comprises of two secondary schools and 12 primary schools. The Trust offers opportunities for schools to network on common priorities.

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. It is not yet outstanding because progress is variable between years and the teaching and monitoring of pupils’ progress has some inconsistencies. Nonetheless, pupils achieve well because the overall quality of teaching is good. The school is very popular in the community and is always oversubscribed.
- Pupils make good progress from their average starting points. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with above average skills. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their attainment is well above average. This pattern of progress varies between classes being especially strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage and accelerating in Key Stage 2. The focus on challenge for more-able pupils has been most successful in Year 6 but this is not fully effective in Key Stage 1 with some more-able pupils not making enough progress.
- Some teaching is outstanding but it is good overall. Most lessons go at a brisk pace and capture pupils’ interest but this is not consistent in all lessons. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is not fully exploited. In most lessons, pupils work at tasks that are challenging and match their ability. However, there are occasions when assessment is not used effectively.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are very proud of their school. They have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Pupils are acutely aware of how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils are eager to fulfil responsibilities in the school especially those that help others. This ensures a very happy community.
- The school is effectively led and managed. Well above average attainment has been sustained and when a dip occurs the response is swift, as is evident in the improvement in mathematics this year. Although a few relative shortcomings remain in teaching, the overall leadership and management of teaching and performance are good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement so that all pupils, particularly the more able in Key Stage 1, make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - ensuring lessons always go at a brisk pace and activities capture pupils' interests
 - using assessment effectively in lessons to match work more closely to pupils' abilities
 - ensuring more accuracy in assessments carried out at the start of each academic year by using the wide range of information available
 - extending resources for ICT in classrooms and using these to promote pupils' skills in lessons.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Overall pupils' learning in lessons is good. This is especially evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where in response to some very effective teaching children make great strides forward. Letters and sounds are taught successfully through practical activities and this is also evident in Key Stage 1. By placing children in groups matching their ability and following a structured programme, good progress is assured in acquiring early reading and writing skills. Learning is most effective in Key Stage 2 where expectations are high. The challenge is often exceptional because pupils are given the choice to challenge themselves. This was most effective in Year 6 where the teacher was implementing the new structured approach to problem solving. A variety of problems at differing ability levels were on offer and pupils were challenged to try one they thought they would find difficult. One pupil said 'I chose decimals as I find them hard.' Support was readily available and led to success and pupils growing in confidence. In lessons where the pace is slower, or as seen in a science lesson, pupils spent too long on preparation before getting to the investigation, pupils' progress declines.

The vast majority of parents and carers agree with inspectors that progress is good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress from broadly average starting points and leave the Reception class with above the expected skill level. Progress in writing is outstanding. Children start with lower skills in this subject and leave writing confidently simple sentences. Achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Progress is generally good in Key Stage 1. Attainment in Year 2 is broadly above average especially in reading and writing, although it is not as high this year in mathematics. In all subjects the numbers exceeding the level expected are closer to average and more-able pupils do not always make enough progress. This is not the case in Key Stage 2, and currently in Year 6 approximately half the pupils are working at high levels. Attainment overall is well above average and in reading is especially high.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, although this varies between classes. In most cases, teachers match support and resources correctly to the needs of these pupils so that learning is good. The school has successfully implemented a more boy-friendly curriculum which has resolved previous discrepancies between the progress of boys and girls.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are virtually unanimous that teaching is good. This agrees with the inspection findings. There are examples of outstanding teaching and all lessons include several strengths. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils. Lessons run smoothly because pupils understand what is expected of them. A systematic approach to teaching reading means that this is taught successfully across the school. Similarly, the teaching of mathematics is improving rapidly because staff are following the same approach to teaching problem solving.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff are knowledgeable about the needs of children of this age. Children enjoy learning because the variety of opportunities keeps the fun in learning as a priority. For example, they learned the names of shapes quickly as these were linked to one of their favourite stories about Elmer the elephant. A good variety of independent activities and those directed by adults enhance children's confidence. High expectations in the teaching of letters and sounds have a very positive impact on children's progress in writing.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers often plan a sequence of lessons so that pupils have time and experiences to consolidate and extend their learning. This was evident in Year 5, when a fast moving lesson and effective questioning extended knowledge about planning writing using a story board. In this lesson and others that were similarly successful, the variety of approaches sustains pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils enjoy watching film excerpts that promote reflection about characters and their life experiences. When variety is missing or too much time is allocated to an activity, the pace of learning slows. In many lessons, teachers make effective use of the interactive white board to clarify a point. Although teachers use the ICT suite to teach computer skills, the lack of resources in individual classrooms restricts the regular promotion of these skills. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to work with small groups both in and out of class. They contribute significantly to the good teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. On the odd occasion, work for these pupils is not at the correct level. This was seen during a whole class introduction when tasks were above the heads of these pupils and they were unable to keep pace with others. This shortcoming in the use of assessment also leads to lack of challenge for more-able pupils. This is more apparent in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. There is some inaccuracy in assessments as pupils move between year groups because not all teachers make full use of all of the information now available. This then makes it difficult for staff to plan for individual pupils' needs. Marking is often good, especially in writing, and clearly tells pupils how to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

This is a friendly school and pupils eagerly discuss their many successes. They point with pride to the Eco flag flying over the school and understand their role in society. The overwhelming majority of pupils and their parents and carers consider that behaviour is good. Inspectors agree and records indicate this is typical for the school. Occasionally, an undercurrent of talking and restlessness occurs if teaching is less inspirational. Pupils value the award of Golden Time when they earn time for activities of their choice. Pupils are polite and courteous. When asked for their opinion pupils agreed that they would not change anything and that 'they enjoy carrying out jobs, like monitors and peer buddies as this brings the children together'.

Pupils feel safe in school and recall information on keeping secure. The older pupils show a mature understanding of possible dangers to themselves. They are aware that bullying can happen in a variety of ways and are adamant this is not a problem. They recognise small squabbles upset others and usually sort these out amongst themselves. If required they are confident staff will resolve any concerns. Parents and carers support this view and 100% identify their children are well looked after. Pupils' enjoyment in school is reflected in their well above average attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other's skills extremely effectively. They ensure that self-evaluation is accurate. The school's overall performance is evaluated by an in-depth analysis of national test results. This leads to the correct priorities and plans to drive the school forward. Response is swift. Success is evident in the rise in pupils' attainment in mathematics based on a consistent approach to problem solving. Regular monitoring of teaching identifies areas that require attention. As a result, training and performance management are closely aligned to individual needs. However, this monitoring process is not always sufficiently rigorous and a few shortcomings in teaching remain. Subject leaders evaluate their subjects well but their subsequent action plans lack the sharpness of the literacy and numeracy plans. Nevertheless, this is a school where attainment is rising and previous concerns have been resolved especially in the higher attainment in writing. The clarity for the future ensures good capacity to improve.

The governing body contributes well to decision making and was influential in the establishment of the Pontefract Educational Trust. This has benefited the school with shared training and consultancy. Members of the governing body visit the school to check on safety. Consequently, safeguarding requirements are met. The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination is good. While there remains some variability in progress linked to the quality of teaching there is no significant difference between groups of pupils.

The high quality art on display and the row of guitars reflect the well balanced curriculum. Interventions provide a boost when needed. Pupils are very well prepared for the future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully through visits, visitors and themed weeks. Pupils learn about different cultures in lessons and through links with schools in Ghana and Uganda. The school is searching for more local contacts to extend experiences about life in a multi-cultural society.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pontefract Larks Hill Junior and Infant School, Pontefract, WF8 4RJ

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. It was a delight to talk to you and it is very clear that you enjoy school.

You go to a good school and I am sure you already know this. It is a very happy school and you contribute to this by your good behaviour. It was good to hear that you feel safe and to see the way you help each other. Older pupils provide good role models for you all especially in the way they carry out many duties in school. Your attendance is higher than we see in many schools. Well done! You make good progress and leave school with well above average attainment especially in reading. You enjoy a wide range of activities and told us that you appreciated the clubs and visits. Your school is managed well and this ensures that if a weakness arises it is quickly sorted out. We think there are some changes that the school can make to improve your progress even more and these are:

- make sure that lessons are always exciting and go at a brisk pace
- check that work is set just at the right level so that all of you, especially those in Years 1 and 2 who find learning easy, are challenged to do your very best
- use assessment to check closely on your progress when you change classes
- improve the use of computers in your lessons.

You have every right to be proud of your school and your parents and carers are also pleased with your achievements. I am sure you will have many happy memories of your time at Larks Hill. I wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Platt
Lead inspector

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