

# Lowton Junior and Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106421
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	377400
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sarah Drake

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Dutton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Silcock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2009
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Drake

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by seven different teachers. She also conducted three short observations of sessions led by external specialists in music and physical education and one by a teaching assistant promoting pupils' literacy skills. The inspector heard eight pupils read and talked with them about their attitudes to reading. She held meetings with school staff, one group of pupils, one representative of the governing body and one parent, as well as speaking informally with staff and many pupils. She also took into account a submission from the Chair of the Governing Body who was not able to be present during the inspection. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. She observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to pupils' achievement, safeguarding and other aspects of leadership and management including school self-evaluation and development planning. The inspector also took into account the responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 49 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Lowton Junior and Infant school is around half the size of an average primary school. It consistently has a higher proportion of boys than girls on roll. Most pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Well-above average proportions of pupils are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. Many more pupils than is usual join the school part-way through their primary education. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government. It holds Green Flag status and Healthy School Status.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant long-term staff absence. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed as well as three teaching staff and three additional learning support assistants. The school is now part of the Golborne and Lowton Cooperative Learning Partnership Trust. In September 2011, due to reorganisation in the area, 30 children joined the Reception class, almost double the numbers in previous years.

The school is the lead school for the phase three children's centre which shares the site. The centre did not form part of the inspection but, once it has been inspected, a report of its quality will be available on the Ofsted website.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Lowton Junior and Infant is a good school which is held in high esteem by parents, carers and pupils. It is not an outstanding school because pupils’ achievement in writing is not as good as in reading or mathematics. Also, while the leadership and management of senior leaders are very strong, not enough other staff take on a share of the responsibility for driving forward school improvement.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been on a sharply rising trend over the past four years and is now above average overall. However, too few pupils, particularly boys, reach the higher levels in writing at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. This is partly because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length.
- Good quality teaching ensures that pupils understand what they are expected to do in lessons and that they receive swift support when they encounter difficulties. The new assessment and mentoring system ensures that teachers rigorously mark specific pieces of work but they sometimes miss opportunities provided by other written work to offer pupils clear guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve.
- Pupils’ outstanding, safe behaviour and exceptionally positive attitudes to learning make an excellent contribution to the happy learning environment. Pupils treat others with respect and good care, accepting difference and celebrating others’ success. As one commented, ‘If you get something wrong no-one laughs but they say “good try”’.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully led the school through a very unsettled two years. They provide a crystal-clear sense of direction and manage teaching and performance in a rigorous yet supportive manner which leads to improvement. As yet, too few other staff have responsibilities beyond the classroom.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment in writing at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
  - increasing the proportion of pupils, particularly boys, reaching the higher levels
  - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to write at length
  - improving the quality of marking in pupils' work beyond the core literacy programme.
- Increase the involvement of staff, other than senior leaders, in taking responsibility for driving forward school improvement.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

One parent's comment, 'not only does the school have the pupils' education and welfare as a priority, it encourages each child to grow and exceed their individual expectations,' typifies parents' and carers' satisfaction with their children's achievement. Pupils relish learning. They settle swiftly at the start of lessons and sustain their concentration well. This includes children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who understand the need for routines, listen well to adults and collaborate well with others as they explore and learn. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, purposefully discuss their thinking with partners and willingly volunteer suggestions. They carefully check and evaluate their own and others' work, and appreciate that they can now use their assessment files, 'to check what you got wrong last time, if you want to achieve better'. In a lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils worked exceptionally well, scanning reference books for key facts about Ancient Greece and reflecting on how to synthesise them for best effect. In a lively music session, pupils, including a few who find it hard to concentrate, worked exceptionally well together as some led and others gradually joined in the demanding South American dance rhythm, using a wide range of percussion instruments.

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are now broadly as expected for their age, although in the past they have generally been below age-related expectations. Children usually, and currently, make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as do pupils in Key Stage 1, but staffing upheavals over the past two years had an impact on learning in these year-groups which led to attainment falling. These difficulties are now resolved and pupils, including those in Year 3, are catching up on previous underperformance quickly. By the end of the Reception Year children's skills are in line with expectations for their age or better in most areas of learning. Year 2 pupils' work is broadly average in reading and mathematics but it lags behind in writing, especially at the higher level 3. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and by Year 6 attainment is above average, including in reading. The proportions working at the higher Level 5 are well above average in reading and above average in mathematics but this is not the case in writing, especially among boys.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress from their starting points and many attain in line with the national average for all pupils by the end of Year 6. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those joining the school mid-key stage and others whose circumstances make them likely to be more vulnerable also

thrive in the supportive environment and achieve well. This is due to the precision with which the school analyses and meets each pupil's needs.

## Quality of teaching

Teaching is of good quality and is sometimes outstanding. Parents, carers and pupils unanimously agree that the teaching is good. All teachers plan carefully and make clear to pupils the purpose of each lesson. They manage pupils well, making very good use of praise. They create a highly supportive environment in which excellent relationships abound and everyone's efforts are valued. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities both inside and outdoors are inviting, well-organised and, together with the adults' well-focused interactions with individuals, successfully promote children's skills in all areas of learning. In literacy and numeracy lessons, the organisation of pupils across the school into small groups according to the levels they are working at ensures that activities are well adapted to their needs, build well on their prior learning and develop their skills in a logical sequence. This also applies to the teaching of reading which enables pupils to attain so well by the end of Key Stage 2. Teaching assistants provide good quality support that is well-tailored to the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or, sometimes, more able pupils.

Teachers make good use of subject-specific language and check frequently throughout lessons that pupils understand the concepts being learnt and are working purposefully. They use effectively examples of pupils' successful work or misconceptions to help others refocus their efforts and realise how they could improve. One mathematics lesson for older pupils progressed at a very good pace as the teacher skilfully moved forward pupils' understanding from how to calculate percentages, to how to apply this to real-life situations such as discounted offers in advertisements. Most teachers use probing questions that develop well pupils' listening, thinking and speaking skills. Sometimes, they talk too much and miss opportunities to engage pupils actively in recall, explanation of the methods chosen or the meaning of words. The detailed marking of pupils' work linked to the core literacy programme provides clear pointers for improvement. Elsewhere marking is not always so clear about what pupils have done well and what they should do to improve their work. Pupils do practise and use their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum but writing at length is not encouraged sufficiently.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils describe typical behaviour at the school as 'brilliant and great'. Pupils, parents and carers agree that pupils behave very well and feel safe. They attribute this to the way that staff and other pupils offer them excellent care and comfort when necessary. Since the introduction of a new behaviour management system incidents of misbehaviour have reduced significantly. Pupils confirm that the few pupils who find self-discipline hard to achieve are helped to modify their behaviour and that their learning is hardly ever disrupted. Typically, pupils' excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning make a very strong contribution to their good progress. Pupils are extremely supportive of each other, for example with spellings or when working in pairs. Those of different ages, abilities and ethnicity relate very well with each other. They show others respect and are unfailingly polite. All automatically stand back to let others pass and thank others for kindnesses shown. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and take active steps, for example through making posters or offering friendship and support in the playground, to prevent it. They say that bullying is very rare and that staff deal with any incidents swiftly and

effectively. Pupils are alert to hazards and know how to protect themselves from harm. They are fully confident to share any worries with staff. Due to the school's persistent actions, attendance has improved well this year and is now average despite a few pupils' lengthy absence due to medical or family circumstances.

## **Leadership and management**

Highly focused, determined and skilful leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, ably supported and challenged by members of the governing body, have enabled pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 to increase significantly since the previous inspection. During this period the school has successfully taken on responsibility for the children's centre and tackled some significant staffing issues. Professional development and performance management of staff are well focused on priorities and support improvement. For example, new assessment and literacy programmes have been introduced to good effect, with strong guidance and support to help staff implement them confidently and consistently. The quality of teaching and the progress made by individuals and different groups of pupils are rigorously monitored. Analysis of the outcomes leads to swift action should any concerns arise. This has led to improvements in both teaching and pupils' achievement and demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further. The school is fully aware that not enough other staff currently contribute to whole-school development.

Every effort is made to ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity, the success of which is evident in the equally good progress made by different groups of pupils. The provision to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is exceptionally well adapted to meet their specific requirements. One parent commented, 'staff strike the perfect balance between giving my child all the help she needs and giving her the freedom to develop'. Safeguarding arrangements are given high priority and meet requirements. The curriculum is innovative and effective in the way that literacy and numeracy are taught according to the level pupils are working at rather than their age group. It provides plenty of interest through visitors, other enhancements and extra-curricular activities, and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Partnerships with parents, carers, other schools, including through the trust, and a wide range of agencies effectively augment the provision.

## 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](http://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.**



21 June 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Lowton Junior and Infant School, Warrington, WA3 2AW**

I greatly enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you very much for your warm welcome and for treating me with such politeness. Particular thanks should go to those of you who read to me, talked about your enjoyment of reading or spoke with me about other things. You helped me both to understand why it is that you all enjoy school so much and to make the judgement that yours is a good school.

Pupils with different abilities and life experiences all achieve well because the teaching is of good quality. The way that literacy and numeracy lessons are now taught means that those of you who need a bit more support or who are racing ahead with your work are equally well catered for. Your behaviour is excellent and your attendance has improved this year – well done! It was a real pleasure to see how well you get on with and support each other.

By the end of Year 6 you reach above-average standards in reading and mathematics but not in writing because not enough of you reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. I have asked the school to help you do this. In particular I have asked the leaders to make sure that more of the marking gives you clear pointers for improvement. I have also asked them to make sure you have plenty of opportunities to practise writing at length. I saw that you do write in, for example, your science and topic books but sometimes what you write is very brief – especially the boys! So you can help by trying hard to put more of all your good ideas down on paper.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school very well. The other staff all work hard to provide you with a good quality education. I have asked the school to make sure that more of them now take on responsibility for leading different aspects of school life. This letter comes with my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake  
Lead inspector

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