

# Lowtown Primary School

Kent Road, Lowton, Pudsey, West Yorkshire, LS28 9BB

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school:

- Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. From below average starting points when they start in the Reception class, pupils make good progress and reach broadly average levels of attainment when they leave at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils reach or exceed the levels expected nationally in reading and writing.
- All pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, enjoy reading and writing. They regularly practise their skills and make good progress.
- Teachers and support staff work together very well to ensure that pupils make good progress by making good use of different resources and planning for individual needs.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well-mannered and they feel very safe. Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show a high level of care for others. Senior leaders and staff are excellent role models.
- Morale is high among staff as are their aspirations for the school.
- The headteacher and her senior leadership team along with the support of governors have worked extremely well to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection report.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has strengthened its effectiveness and holds the school to account.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good rather than outstanding. Teachers' approaches to marking work and to informing pupils about how they are getting on are variable. Teachers' marking and feedback does not always help pupils to understand what they have achieved or what they need to do next in their work. Pupils are not fully involved in assessing their own work against their learning targets.
- The skills of subject leaders are not yet fully developed. They are not always clear about the strengths and weaknesses within their areas of responsibility through establishing clear improvement plans or ensuring that good and outstanding teaching practices are effectively shared and promoted among staff.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight teachers and two teaching assistants teaching 14 lessons and listened to groups of pupils read.
- The inspectors had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, two governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence that included: pupil assessment information and documentation; the school improvement plan; governors' reports and minutes of meetings; the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance; local authority reports; school policies and documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.
- The inspectors considered 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors met with a small group of parents informally at the start of the day and considered one letter and 26 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Martin

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a below average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. A few pupils are from Eastern Europe and are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has undergone a number of staff changes since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher.
- There is a separately managed childcare centre (BEST) based on the school site.

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

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is good and better, so that pupils make outstanding progress, by:
  - involving pupils more in assessing their own work against their learning targets
  - making sure all pupils are clear about their next steps and how to improve their work and that pupils always follow these steps
  - establishing a clear policy for marking pupils' work, particularly for spelling across the curriculum subjects, and that all staff follow this agreed approach.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders by:
  - making sure they are clear about their subject strengths and that they establish and agree precise actions to improve identified areas of weakness
  - making sure they make a more effective contribution to promoting good and better teaching by ensuring the best teaching practices are shared.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- From below average starting points, children in the Reception class make good progress. In some areas of learning, such as numeracy and social development, children's skills improve so much so that they are above average by the time they start in Year 1. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Children settle quickly to their learning, taking responsibility for tidying away their equipment and responding well to instructions from adults. They make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills because they are encouraged to talk to one another and to staff when discussing their work. This was seen, for example, as children were asked to contribute their design ideas to the 'Christmas Plan' before making toys for Santa's sleigh. Children were able to sketch how their toys would look and talk enthusiastically about them.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and their attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average. In reading, pupils enthusiastically practise their letters and the sounds they make, including when the letters are blended. Pupils' good progress in reading is indicated in the above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the national standards in the Year 1 national phonics check in 2012.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are similar to those expected nationally. This represents good progress from their previously below-average starting points at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved since the previous inspection.
- Year 6 pupils rise to the challenge of calculating fractions of quantities, for example three-eighths of 980 grams. They are expected to show initiative and can work independently. In an English lesson, pupils were able to provide interesting descriptive terms, such as 'gliding' or 'silken' to describe what they observed in an advertisement about mince pies and cream.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, together with the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language and those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium do as well as other pupils because of the good support they receive in lessons. They respond well to the support provided by skilled teaching assistants and the learning mentor. They are encouraged to know their targets and practise regularly in school or when doing homework.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they could when they are provided with the opportunities to read new words or offer their written ideas and suggestions. Very occasionally, when pupils are not motivated, they become restless and not fully focused on their task.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Most is now good or better. Arrangements to accurately assess what children know, can do and understand both when they join the Reception class and regularly as they move through the school are good. Teachers plan work that meets the needs of pupils' varying abilities. Pupils are set challenging targets so that they make good progress. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for example, support staff and resources were well deployed so that less-able pupils learned about the language of mathematics by using toy figures to count out and take away numbers. The more-able pupils were given a more challenging task to record formally their answers.
- Staff work hard to make their classrooms welcoming and exciting by creating colourful displays. They make good use of audio, visual and other information and communication technology equipment to make sure pupils learn well. In an outstanding English lesson, the teacher made very good use of short video clips to inspire pupils to use 'powerful language' when developing their persuasive writing skills. In the same lesson, the teacher's skilled questioning of pupils enabled her to find out which pupils needed further support and ensured that the teaching assistant was deployed according to need during the course of the lesson.
- Teaching assistants help pupils to make good progress. They skilfully ask pupils questions that

encourage them to think for themselves. For example, an assistant encouraged a pupil to attempt to spell a particular word on their own rather relying on their help.

- Where teaching is good or better, the activities are varied so that pupils are allowed to work on their own, work with a partner or are asked to stop for a while to discuss with teachers and peers about how well they are doing and to explore their feelings. In these cases, teachers check pupils' work in their books during the lesson, giving quick feedback while encouraging pupils to write down their own views. For example, one pupil wrote, 'I'm going to challenge myself by writing a simile'. This was followed by a piece of writing that included the phrase, 'The heart is like an engine'. This helps pupils to make rapid progress.
- Where teaching is not yet good, teachers' marking does not help pupils to understand what they have achieved or what they need to do next in their work. Opportunities are missed for pupils to talk about their ideas and work with their teacher, such as how well they are using descriptive language in their independent writing. Pupils' spelling errors are not always picked up in other curriculum subjects and are therefore repeated in later work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school is providing strong support to enable pupils to develop as thinking, caring and well-behaved young people. Pupils say, 'We strive to achieve our personal best'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They say that they enjoy school because 'the work is challenging' with 'fun activities' and 'school trips like residential'.
- Parents are very positive about the school and strongly agree that their children are safe and very well cared for. When asked about how safe they felt, one pupil said, 'If you fall over, someone will pick you up'.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. One parent stated that her child 'would come to school seven days a week' if that were possible. The atmosphere at the school encourages all pupils to do their best in lessons and elsewhere, to appreciate each other's achievements and to treat each other with respect.
- Pupils said, 'definitely not' when asked if there was any bullying and, 'never' when they were asked if there were any racist incidents. This is confirmed by the lack of reported incidents over the past year. Pupils know that there are different forms of bullying, for example, the misuse of social networking websites.
- The school has good system to manage pupils' behaviour. Staff and pupils work well together to support those pupils who might sometimes find behaving well difficult. The school's records show that behaviour over time is good. There have been no recorded exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils say that they support one another regardless of where they come from or their religion.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- Since her appointment, the new headteacher has established a strong leadership team that is successfully driving school improvement. They effectively communicate their high aspirations to staff, parents, governors and pupils. Parents praise the school and the vast majority would recommend it to others.
- Despite the disruption resulting from a two-year period of staffing changes, the school has built successfully on its previous strengths and has addressed areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. This includes improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, which are now both good and shows that there is a good capacity to improve further.
- The amount of good or better teaching has increased appreciably since the last inspection report. This is because leaders carefully check the quality of teaching and ensure that staff are given support to improve their skills. The school's system of staff appraisal and pay awards is linked closely with the improvement plans and pupils' progress. Staff and governors have

comprehensively restructured staff roles and responsibilities. The respective skills and capabilities of individual staff have been considered carefully so that they make a positive impact on bringing about school improvement. The school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance are effective and are well-supported and challenged by the local authority. Very good use of information about pupils' attainment and progress ensures that the right decisions are made about staffing, resources and to pinpoint further improvement priorities. This is why plans are already in place to address a few remaining weaknesses in teaching, such as to improve the quality of marking. Similarly, senior leaders are now focusing on developing the role of the subject leaders, particularly so that they are clearer about the actions needed to improve their area of responsibility and to make sure the best teaching practices are promoted and shared.

- Leaders know that an exciting curriculum encourages pupils to enjoy lessons and learn well and since the previous inspection, it has improved. Pupils are provided with many first-hand experiences to develop their ability to think and act independently, for example, when pupils at Key Stage 1 take part in 'woodlands school' activities. These activities are used skilfully to encourage pupils to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Pupils take part in a good range of after-school activities, including athletics and performing arts.
- The school benefits from a range of partnerships, for example, with a guidance and support committee which serves the local cluster of schools. This provides additional help and advice for families.
- Because leaders promote learning well, pupils have become great advocates of the school. They are very proud of their school and are wonderfully tolerant and caring of others, especially where there are differences in culture, ethnicity, faith or ability. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school has strong child protection and safeguarding policies that are well implemented. All staff have received relevant and up-to-date training.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well informed about how well the school is doing and knows its strengths and weaknesses. They know that the quality of teaching has improved over time and the need to have rigorous checking systems in the light of recent staff changes. Governors manage the headteacher's appraisal and they are well informed about appraisal arrangements for other staff. They manage the school's resources and finances well. They have agreed how the pupil premium funding is to be used, such as by providing additional support staff time to support pupils with additional literacy, numeracy or emotional needs. Governors have received training in safeguarding and safe recruitment; they are well-informed about pupils' achievements and are soon to attend a course on how to interpret school data systems.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	107862
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	400942

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

<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>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Wood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Downham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0113 2567303
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