

Lowther Primary School

Stillingfleet Road, Barnes, London, SW13 9AE

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress with an increasing proportion making rapid progress. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make excellent progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average.
- Teaching throughout the school is good with some outstanding practice. Teachers make sure that pupils are constantly striving to achieve. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning.
- Homework extends and develops learning that takes place in school. Pupils, teachers, parents and carers value the role this plays in developing learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. They are enthusiastic about reading and make good progress as a result.
- Behaviour both in classrooms and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are polite, courteous and are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- There is strong partnership with families and the wider community. Parents and carers are involved in the life of the school and benefit from a range of workshops.
- Senior leaders and governors are fully committed to developing the school and have secured improvements since the last inspection, particularly in behaviour.
- Governors offer challenge and support to the school. They ensure that financial resources are used efficiently and reviewed for their impact.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The contribution made by leaders in charge of subjects is at an early stage of development. They do not yet take an active enough role in driving improvement through checking the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to make sure that all pupils make rapid progress.
- Teachers do not regularly give pupils the opportunity to respond or reflect on written and oral feedback about their learning and progress in class.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 20 lessons taught by 12 members of staff. One observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, the governing body and with two parents or carers who requested to meet with inspectors.
- Inspectors spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team examined assessment information, the school’s development plan, the annual school evaluation, attendance and behaviour information and governing body documentation.
- Inspectors conducted a scrutiny of pupils’ work. A sample of pupils’ books was reviewed with the headteacher following a jointly observed lesson.
- Inspectors examined the school’s information about pupils’ progress. They took account of 109 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection, including one which was sent electronically to the inspection provider. They also considered eight letters from parents and carers, sent to the inspection team.
- Inspectors talked with pupils who attend the school’s breakfast and after-school clubs. Inspectors visited the school’s breakfast club.

Inspection team

David Storrie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gordon Jackson	Additional Inspector
Clementina Olufunke Aina	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average sized primary school and has 11 classes. The school is currently expanding to become a two-form entry school and has two classes in all year groups apart from Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Since the last inspection there have been a significant number of staffing changes, with 11 new teachers appointed in the last two years. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and a deputy headteacher in September 2011.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes two Nursery classes that operate a morning and an afternoon session for children. There are two Reception classes.
- Fewer pupils than the national average are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional money provided by the government to support pupils in care, those entitled to free school meals and those from service families).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching throughout the school by:
 - making sure that all feedback explains how pupils can improve their work
 - making sure that teachers always give pupils time to reflect on and respond to written and oral feedback.
- Develop the role of leaders in charge of subjects so that they contribute to raising achievement across the school through effective monitoring and evaluation of learning and progress within their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels that are generally below those expected for their age. Pupils make rapid progress so that they are well prepared to start Key Stage 1.
- The Year 1 phonics screening check indicated that a minority of pupils had not grasped the essential basic skills for reading. However, inspectors found this group of pupils had made good progress with a large majority now having a more secure grasp of the connections between letters and sounds. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is good and is making sure that an increasing number of pupils have a strong base for their reading and writing. A small minority of pupils in Year 2 are not confident in using phonics, but the school has effective support in place for these pupils and they have made good progress as a result.
- Reading is very effectively promoted by the school. Pupils in all years read with enthusiasm. All pupils make at least good progress in reading and many make rapid progress.
- The school's information about pupils' learning and the work in their books show that all pupils are making good progress. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Senior leaders have focused on improving outcomes and many pupils are now exceeding typically expected progress.
- Parents and carers believe that good quality support is given to individual pupils or groups who need it. Inspectors agreed with this view and found this to be particularly the case for those with English as an additional language, as well as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Parents and carers appreciate the school's support for learning at home. For example, a parent or carer of one child at risk of falling behind in mathematics said, 'I received a comprehensive two week plan with lots of different tasks and methods I can practise with my daughter.' Such partnership is a key feature of the school.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress, with some making rapid progress.
- The school's commitment to closing gaps in achievement highlights the determination to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils. There is no significant gap between the achievement of pupils from different ethnic groups.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong. Pupils are confident speakers because they are regularly asked to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups. Where teaching is best, they are encouraged to give extended replies to teachers' questions.
- Pupil premium funding is well targeted, ensuring that pupils are effectively supported in their academic learning. It is also used to provide access to a range of before- and after-school activities that enrich their learning. As a result these pupils are doing better than similar groups nationally. The gap between their performance and that of their peers has been reduced to four months in writing and three months in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents and carers agree strongly that their children are well taught and are given excellent academic and pastoral support. Parents and carers report that the school is approachable and makes every effort to involve them in the education of their children. There is a willingness by staff to listen to concerns and respond to learning needs.
- Where teaching was outstanding it was the result of inspirational learning activities. Teachers set work at the right level of difficulty for individual pupils and challenged them through highly skilful questioning. Pupils' learning in these lessons was rapid as a result. Most teaching is currently good and results in pupils making good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations and make sure that the work set helps to move on the learning

of all pupils. They offer lots of praise and encouragement and successfully raise pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. This creates a very positive learning climate in the school which ensures pupils are highly engaged in their learning.

- Teachers are good at using information about how well pupils are doing to plan future lessons. However, although teachers mark work regularly, pupils are not always given sufficient advice on how to improve their work further. Pupils are not given frequent enough opportunities to respond to marking or make corrections.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure that the needs of pupils are met. Teaching assistants question pupils well, extending their understanding and ensuring that they work out answers for themselves. They encourage pupils very well, giving praise and developing pupils' self-confidence.
- Teachers make good use of opportunities to encourage pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- Children in the Early Years Foundations Stage are able to make their own choices from a range of activities, as well as being supported in their learning by adults. This, alongside a stimulating outdoor area, means that children make excellent progress through their work and play.
- The outdoor environment is used effectively by the whole school. Year 1 pupils explored the school allotment to think about describing words. During this learning, pupils were excited to be exploring the natural world; this was particularly the case with a small group who were creating a description of the school's pet chickens!
- Teaching contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through activities such as school assemblies, links with the local community and local church, school trips and by encouraging cooperation and group working. This is central to the school's charter which states, 'We are at the heart of our local community and have an awareness of the world that encourages respect for everyone's needs, beliefs and cultures.'
- The staff team works together to create a stimulating environment for learning. Throughout the school there are high-quality displays often featuring examples of pupils' work and celebrating collective and individual achievements.
- Homework builds on learning from class work and is a key strength of the school's work. Pupils reported that homework was enjoyable and varied in nature. As a result pupils' homework books show the progress that they are making over the academic year.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils at this school are truly delightful; they are polite, courteous and are exceptionally considerate and willing to provide help to others. Lowther pupils are superb ambassadors and are passionate in their belief that this is an excellent school to attend.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed exceptionally well and only very limited intervention by adults is ever required. Behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- Staff, parents, carers and pupils agree that behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. These opinions are confirmed by the school's behaviour logs and inspectors' observations during the inspection.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a range of bullying, such as physical, emotional and cyber. They state that these incidents happen very rarely and when they do they are followed up thoroughly. Pupils have confidence in the school to deal with any future incidents.
- The school's leadership at all levels has given a high priority to attendance. Rates of attendance are rising due to a range of partnership work to ensure pupils are in school. Attendance is now average and punctuality is excellent.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, who leads by example, has formed a very effective partnership with his deputy headteacher and senior leaders. The staff survey showed there was a strong staff spirit and that the staff team was firmly behind the leadership of the school. This has driven improvements, particularly in behaviour, since the last inspection, and shows the school has the capacity to carry on improving.
- The local authority has worked effectively with the school in order to ensure that leaders accurately evaluate the school's performance. It has provided a suitable level of support tailored to the needs of the school.
- School leaders accurately judged that Lowther was a good school. They have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and what the school needs to do to make further improvements.
- Despite the expansion of the school and a range of building work, the school has ensured a clear focus on improving the education of pupils. All issues from the last inspection have been addressed.
- Subject leaders have, until recently, not taken an active enough role in contributing to improvements in the school. They have not been required to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility, or the impact of their actions on school improvement. Senior leaders recognise that increasing the involvement of subject leaders is an important development in securing future improvements.
- There is a secure link between teacher performance and salary progression. Teachers feel well supported and are keen to continue to develop their skills through training. The school offers very effective support to teachers new to the profession, who make excellent progress in improving their professional practice over time
- The school is committed to building links with parents and carers. It is evident from parental letters, meetings and the online Parent View questionnaire that this is highly appreciated by the school community. Ninety nine per cent of the respondents to Parent View would recommend the school to another parent or carer. The school runs a range of workshops and events to encourage parents and carers to take an active part in school life. During the inspection there was a St George's Day lunch where pupils served parents and carers food they had made themselves.
- The range of subjects and activities offered by the school is well planned and meets the needs and interests of pupils. Music, drama, art and the use of the outdoor environment are all strong features of pupils' learning. These opportunities greatly enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are very well informed about how well the school is performing compared to other schools. They check on the effectiveness of the school's work through reference to information on pupils' progress. Governors hold the school to account and provide challenge to school leaders; for example, they recently challenged the school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Governors are fully aware of the school's systems for managing staff performance and how these link to pay awards. Their careful management of the school's financial resources, including the pupil premium, has helped to narrow gaps in achievement. They make sure that there is effective review of the impact of such funding to improve this aspect of the school's work in the future. Governors have a very clear understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses are in the school and are passionate about working to make sure that this school is the very best. This is demonstrated through their regular visits to the school and their commitment to undertaking governing body training.

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

Unique reference number	102892
Local authority	Richmond upon Thames
Inspection number	402903

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon McNab
Headteacher	Mark Tuffney
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 October 2007
Telephone number	020 87483984
Fax number	020 88463994
Email address	info@lowther.richmond.sch.uk

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