

Lowton West Primary School

Slag Lane, Lowton, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 2ED

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- All pupils, whatever their individual starting points, make good progress at this school and achieve well.
- Senior leaders effectively monitor the quality of teaching delivered across the school. As a result teaching is good and on occasions it is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and work hard to ensure that lessons stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and enjoy attending. Pupils say that they feel safe and standards of behaviour around the school are good.
- The school council has a high profile in the school and is actively involved when key decisions are made.
- The range of enrichment activities available to all pupils is a real strength of the school and contributes well to their learning and enjoyment.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior leaders and governing body. They are fully committed to continuous improvements and have high aspirations for all pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of the school's work. One parent commented, 'I would recommend Lowton West Primary as a fantastic school to any parent.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are, at times, inconsistencies in the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) at Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 2 teachers do not always ensure that the questions posed and activities provided in mathematics lessons challenge pupils, particularly the more-able pupils.
- The intended outcomes, based on targets set by the school in the school development plan, are not sharply focused to show precisely how well the school is doing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. Pupils' books were also scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, senior leaders and subject coordinators. The lead inspector had a discussion on the telephone with a representative of the local authority to hear his views about the school.
- Inspectors took account of 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also talked with parents to hear their views about the school at a coffee morning held on the second day of the inspection. The views of 21 staff who completed questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation form, the school development plan, monitoring files, minutes from governors meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. They also looked at information that the school keeps on pupils' progress and achievement.
- The inspection team also observed pupils at the start of the school day, at morning play time, lunchtime and during an assembly.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carol Machell	Additional Inspector
Anthony Buckley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children in local authority care or from service families, is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similarly below the national average.
- Pupils are predominately of White British heritage.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and Chair of the Governing body have been appointed.
- The school has gained the following awards: Artsmark Silver, Silver Eco-Schools, International School Award, and it has achieved Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff in Key Stage 1, involved in teaching pupils letters and the sounds they make, always use the correct pronunciation of initial sounds.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, particularly for the more-able pupils, in order to raise attainment further by the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide activities that consistently challenge pupils
 - developing teachers' questioning skills to challenge pupils and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Further develop leadership and management by ensuring intended outcomes based on targets set out in the school development plan are more sharply focused to provide a clearer understanding of how well the school is doing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children come into the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. Prior to starting school many children attend private day nurseries in the local area. The school has worked hard to build up good relationships with these settings, getting to know the children before they start school. This helps to make the transition into school as easy as possible.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are happy, confident and busy. Teachers strive to make learning fun and children thoroughly enjoy the exciting range of activities on offer to support their learning and development.
- Pupils continue to progress well at Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2 many pupils are achieving above expected levels in all subjects, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- During Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils that reach the nationally expected levels of attainment in English and mathematics is above the national average. Pupils achieve well in English, particularly in reading. Pupils enjoy books and read widely and often. During the inspection they talked avidly to inspectors about their favourite books and authors. Parents actively support their children's love of reading at home.
- Progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is slightly slower than in English. In Year 6 in 2012, the proportion of pupils making more than the expected rate of progress was below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment in mathematics was still above average. This is due to their previously high levels of attainment achieved at the end of Key Stage 1. The school has taken immediate action to address this slower progress in mathematics. School data and inspection evidence show that the proportion of pupils making more than the expected rate of progress has increased and is now in line with the national average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as their peers nationally. This is the result of early identification and effective support to meet their specific learning needs.
- Taking into consideration their starting points, capabilities and low numbers, pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress and attain in line with their classmates. This is the result of the school's careful targeting of the pupil-premium funds and strong commitment to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Parents are in full agreement that their children achieve well at this school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching overtime is good and at times outstanding. All parents agree that their children are taught well.
- All staff share warm, caring and respectful relationships with pupils. Lessons run smoothly and teaching assistants are generally well deployed to support pupils in their learning.
- The learning environment is stimulating and displays around the school show very clearly that a broad and balanced curriculum is being delivered to all pupils in the school.
- Resources are of good quality and many are used in innovative ways. For example, children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage are recorded on computerised tablets (I-pads). As a result parents are able to access and contribute their children's records from home. Such good practice effectively strengthens the partnership with parents.
- Where teaching has been judged by inspectors as outstanding, teachers' questioning is highly effective and deepens pupils' understanding. For example, during a physical education lesson in

Year 1, the teacher used questioning very skilfully to develop pupils' awareness of the importance of warming up before taking exercise and the bodily changes that occur during physical activity. However, at times, questioning used by teachers in Key Stage 2 during mathematics lessons does not always challenge pupils' thinking, particularly the more able.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and in the best lessons activities are very well matched to pupils' learning needs. As a result all pupils achieve very well. However, on occasions, the activities provided during mathematics lessons at Key Stage 2 do not offer pupils sufficient challenge, particularly the more able.
- During lessons teachers closely monitor the progress that pupils are making. They talk to pupils about what they have done well and what is needed to be done to improve their work further.
- Overall, the quality of marking is good. Pupils are aware of their targets. Helpful comments from teachers ensure that pupils improve their work further and make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is good overall. Pupils are arranged into groups of similar ability and, as a result, the activities provided are well matched to what they already know and can do. However, there are a few inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics at Key Stage 1. Occasionally, staff are not consistent in their pronunciation of initial sounds which impacts on pupils' ability to sound out unknown words.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have a consistently positive attitude to learning. As one pupil typically commented, 'There are so many things to learn, we have nice friends and teachers.'
- Pupils are open, friendly and have very good manners. They are respectful of each other and make visitors to the school feel very welcome.
- Pupils feel and know how to keep themselves safe. One pupil commented, 'We have a lovely headteacher who keeps us safe and we practise fire drills regularly.'
- Bullying in any form is not tolerated at the school. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the many different forms that it can take. As one pupil commented, 'Bullying is disrespectful and hurtful to others.'
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are very aware of the rewards and sanctions that are in place to promote positive behaviour. Parents overwhelmingly agree that standards of behaviour in the school are good. Very occasionally, in lessons where the work provided is not matched precisely to pupils' needs, a few pupils become distracted.
- Pupils are punctual and arrive at school on time. Attendance has improved over the last three years and is now above the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by an effective and determined headteacher. She is ably supported by senior leaders who know the school well and are fully aware of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Their timely and successful intervention to accelerate the progress of mathematics at Key Stage 2, for example, shows that there is a good capacity to improve the school further.
- Staff work well as a team and strongly believe that the school is well led and managed. There is a very positive atmosphere throughout the school.
- The school-development plan is sharply focused and detailed in most respects. However, the intended outcomes, based on the targets that the school has set itself to achieve, are not sharply focused enough to show precisely how well the school is doing.
- Seniors leaders have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and play an effective role in improving it. They ensure that staff have access to a wide range of training to keep up-to-date with developments in teaching and improve their skills. Best teaching practices are shared across the school and teachers' targets are securely linked to the progress that pupils make. Teachers

are not awarded pay rises unless they can show that, over time, their targets have been met.

- Subject leaders are highly motivated and passionate about the subjects they lead. They are knowledgeable about the performance of their subjects and clear about their roles and responsibilities as coordinators. They ensure that detailed action plans are in place to implement change and monitor the impact.
- Secure systems are in place to monitor and track the progress that all pupils in the school make. Where there are gaps in pupils' achievement or if any pupils start to fall behind staff take prompt action to help them catch up.
- The school takes good account of the views of parents. For example, staggered sessions at lunchtime have been introduced for Reception children at the request of parents. Similarly, leaders ensure that pupils actively contribute to school decision-making as members of the school council. For example, pupils instigated 'fun time Friday' on the last Friday of each term and an innovative computerised system for ordering school lunches.
- The school takes great pride in promoting artistic, sporting and cultural activities. For example, two specialist teachers are employed to teach music and art throughout the school. All pupils are given the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument with many performing to a very high standard. The school has also developed links with a school in France and the teaching of French is formally included in the curriculum at Key Stage 2. Such good practice successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and enjoyment of school.
- Pupils greatly appreciate and benefit from the wide variety of visitors to the school, out of school activities and trips to enrich the curriculum. For example, Year 3 pupils enjoyed a trip to Chester to develop further their knowledge of the Romans.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are knowledgeable and have a detailed understanding about all aspects of the school's work, including the progress and achievement of all groups of pupils in the school and how it compares with pupils nationally. They are frequent visitors to the school and each governor has a linked year group and curriculum area. Senior leaders are held to account by governors who ask challenging questions and offer support. The governing body sets challenging targets for the headteacher and are well informed about ways in which the performance of staff is being managed and how it is linked to their pay and progression. They have a secure understanding of the allocation of pupil-premium funding and monitor its impact effectively. Governors have undertaken relevant training to enable them to fulfil their roles. Finances are well managed.

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	106428
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	413261

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	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Cunliffe
Headteacher	Jeanette Westhead
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
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