

# Inspection of Lowton Junior and Infant School

Newton Road, Lowton, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 2AW

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at this school are kind, considerate and well mannered. They forge positive relationships with adults. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy. Pupils show respect towards one another. They told inspectors that everyone is treated fairly, regardless of any differences. Pupils were confident that any concerns or worries that they have about bullying or unkindness would be dealt with promptly by staff.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), live up to leaders' high expectations of their behaviour. The school is a calm place, where pupils can get on with their learning. Children in the early years settle well into school routines.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the roles and responsibilities that they have in school. These include being members of the school council, eco council and head boy and girl. Pupils also enjoy taking part in clubs, such as sports clubs, yoga and choir. Pupils are proud of their charity work, organising cake and bake sales, for example.

Leaders and teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils, including those with SEND, can and should achieve. However, the curriculum in some subjects is in its early stage of development. Some pupils, including children in the early years, do not achieve as well as they should.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has been through a substantial period of change in leadership and staffing. However, leaders are uncompromising in their efforts to improve the quality of education for all pupils. Their actions have secured recent improvements in many aspects of the school. For example, leaders are beginning to develop a well-mapped curriculum. Leaders are aware of what additional work is required to move the school further forward.

The curriculum is increasingly broad and balanced. Leaders are in the process of developing ambitious subject curriculums. In some subjects, leaders have clearly identified the important knowledge that pupils must know and remember. In these subjects, leaders have provided teachers with appropriate guidance and resources so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively. This is helping pupils to learn well.

Other subjects are at an earlier stage of development. In these subjects, leaders are still in the process of refining curriculums to ensure that they are suitably ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders' expectations of what pupils must know, and what content teachers should teach, are not clear enough. This hinders how well some pupils learn.

In subjects where the curriculum design is incomplete, staff do not regularly check on what pupils know and remember. As a result, there are gaps in some pupils' knowledge. These pupils do not develop a rich body of subject knowledge across the curriculum.

Leaders have invested in a new phonics programme. All staff have been trained well to deliver the intended programme. However, leaders have not ensured that children begin to learn phonics as soon as they start in the Reception class. This slow start to learning sounds prevents some children from accessing books easily. Added to this, the books that teachers provide are not well matched to the sounds that children and pupils have learned. As a result, some pupils and children struggle to read with accuracy and confidence. This hinders how fluently some pupils read by the end of Year 2.

Leaders have provided high-quality texts to support the development of pupils' wider vocabulary and oracy skills across the curriculum. Older pupils told inspectors that they find these texts engaging and exciting. This helps these pupils to develop their vocabulary and their writing.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Leaders share relevant information about these pupils with staff. However, some staff do not have the knowledge and skills required to support some pupils with SEND in lessons. This means that these pupils are not able to access aspects of the curriculum well. As a result, in a few subjects, some pupils with SEND do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

Pupils behave well. They can focus on their work because lessons are rarely disrupted. Children in the early years learn to take turns and to listen carefully to staff.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They are respectful of different religions and cultures. Pupils spoke about some aspects of British values, such as democracy and the importance of being a respectful citizen. They demonstrated a mature and secure knowledge of the protected characteristics. However, leaders have not thought carefully enough about the essential knowledge that underpins the personal development programme. Added to this, leaders have not ensured that all staff are equally well equipped to deliver all aspects of pupils' personal development.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They comment that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors are committed to the school. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff receive regular, up-to-date safeguarding training. They know how to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff are clear about what actions they should take if they have concerns about pupils' safety or well-being.

Leaders act promptly in response to any issues raised by staff about a pupil's welfare. They work closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the timely support that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the local community.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Children do not learn phonics from the very start of the Reception class. Added to this, some books do not match the sounds that children and pupils have learned. This hinders how well some children and pupils learn to read. Leaders should ensure that children in the early years start their reading journey promptly and that books are well matched to the phonics programme.
- Some subject curriculums and some aspects of the personal development programme are at an early stage of development. In these subjects, leaders have not finalised the key knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that staff do not have the information that they need to help them to deliver the curriculum well. Subject leaders should ensure that staff are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be taught.
- In some subjects, some teachers do not check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This means that some pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not deepen their knowledge. As leaders finalise their curriculums, they should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- Some teachers do not use the information that they have about pupils with SEND to help them access some aspects of the curriculum. This means that the progress of some pupils with SEND is uneven. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well equipped to support pupils with SEND to learn well alongside their peers.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106421
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226297
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Governing Body
<b>Chair</b>	Tracy Wilson-Vardy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Sutcliffe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lowtonprimary.wigan.sch.uk">www.lowtonprimary.wigan.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. An inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. An inspector met with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They looked at a range of documentation and spoke to leaders and staff. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about whether they feel safe in school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to familiar staff. Inspectors also spoke with leaders and pupils about the curriculum in a small number of other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

## Inspection team

Kelly Butler, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Peter Berry	Ofsted Inspector
Ben Hill	His Majesty's Inspector

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