



Lowfield Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106997
LEA Sheffield
Inspection number 277678
Inspection dates 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Joe Peacock CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	London Road
School category	Community		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		South Yorkshire S2 4NJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 255 2501
Number on roll	173	Fax number	0114 250 9530
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Maggie O'Neil
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Melany Holmes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This inner city school is smaller than average and more pupils than usual enter and leave during term time. A very high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups (81 per cent) most of whom speak English as an additional language. The disadvantage in the local community is higher than average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is well below that expected for children of this age, particularly in social skills and in speaking English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money. The school is accurate in its appraisal of itself in almost all areas. In care, guidance and support, overall provision is satisfactory rather than good because improvement is needed in keeping track of pupils' progress so that teachers can better match their lessons to pupils' needs, particularly for higher attainers and those experiencing learning difficulties. The standards achieved by most pupils are generally below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

In Reception, children make particularly good progress in their personal and social development due to the good quality of teaching. All pupils enjoy their lessons, behave well and their attendance has improved significantly. The majority of parents are very supportive. They appreciate the quality of care and relationship that they have with the school staff. The headteacher's good leadership is appreciated by all. Governors and teachers with management responsibilities are not at present sufficiently involved in monitoring the effectiveness of provision.

The capacity for improvement is good. Most of the previous issues have been thoroughly addressed. However, standards remain below average for a significant number, particularly in English. Improving resources and further developing the use of modern technology as a teaching and learning aid remain as an ongoing priority for the school.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics, the school needs to:

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that work is well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, including those capable of reaching high standards.
- Ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used more to help pupils learn.
- Improve evaluation and monitoring by ensuring that all managers check the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and that governors check the effectiveness of the school more thoroughly.
- Ensure that assessment of pupils' work and progress is carried out thoroughly and that the information gained is used to help pupils make further progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Reception class with standards that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress, especially

in their personal development, because of good teaching and support, but nevertheless, many still do not achieve the standards expected of them by the end of Reception.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain well below average by the end of Year 2. In the 2005 national test results, less than half the pupils reached the expected levels and none achieved at the higher level in writing and mathematics. Many pupils are at the early stages of speaking English which limits their progress, but given this, their achievement is satisfactory overall.

During Years 3 to 6 pupils' achievement continues to be satisfactory. Many still do not speak English fluently and many join and leave each year. In general, standards are considerably below average. However, in 2005 test results in Year 6 improved from 2004 reflecting positive school strategies such as measures to improve attendance.

Pupils were especially successful in science, where every pupil gained the level expected for their age, and three-quarters attained higher levels. Teachers were allowed to read test questions to those with English as an additional language, helping their understanding. However, in mathematics and English, very few pupils attained higher levels. Girls outperformed the boys showing that school strategies to improve their attainment have been successful. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who do not speak English fluently is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like school and are enthusiastic about what it offers them. Relationships between pupils are good, although the fact that many cannot speak English fluently limits their communication with others and affects their self-confidence.

Most pupils behave well, although a few are a little inconsiderate at playtimes. In the main, however, pupils are developing good social skills and they understand right from wrong - even the youngest children respond to messages about the importance of sharing.

The school values all cultures and pupils celebrate different faith festivals together. Older pupils make a good contribution to the community and at the same time develop useful skills for the future. Year 6 pupils make and sell Eid cards, with the profit going to the Kashmiri earthquake fund.

The school council provides a good forum for pupils to express views in a formal way. They have already played a part in improving school lunches and are now prioritising improving playtimes. Pupils feel safe and secure and they know how to keep healthy through involvement in sport and knowledge of the need for a healthy diet.

Good attention to improving attendance over the past few years has successfully brought it close to the national figures. Some children arrive late in the mornings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and pupils are keen to learn. From the time pupils enter the school, teachers work hard to develop pupils' social skills and their English so that they are happy and able to learn.

Teachers emphasise developing pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy and provide good opportunities for these to be developed in other subjects. Improving the teaching of science has been a recent and successful focus. New interactive whiteboards are used effectively to add interest to pupils' learning. However, there are few planned opportunities for pupils to use computers to support their learning in all subjects.

When teachers plan their lessons, they focus on meeting the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or those who do not speak English fluently, often through the deployment of teaching assistants. However, teachers do not give enough attention to meeting the needs of pupils capable of attaining higher standards. Work is often too easy for them.

When the school uses supply teachers there is not always enough liaison between class teachers and supply teachers when planning work. It results in work that is often not sufficiently challenging. Teachers assess pupils' achievement in English and mathematics carefully, but do not yet do so in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with a good emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy. A recent focus on improving resources and investigative work in science has resulted in higher test results. ICT is not yet used well enough to help pupils learn in other subjects. Pupils' personal development is promoted through regular lessons on topics such as 'being kind to others'.

There are also a wide range of additional activities, such as a school play performed at a local theatre and a chess club. There is a good range of clubs through which pupils can develop interests and talents in sport and this includes innovative ones like cheerleading which attract some pupils, mainly girls, who would not join in more traditional ones. The range beyond sport is limited. A good range of visits out of school help to broaden pupils' experiences of life beyond school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school cares well for pupils and ensures that they are safe and secure. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are rigorous. Pupils are very well known by adults who give effective support to help meet their personal needs.

The learning mentor provides high quality care and support, running the breakfast club and healthy tuck shop, working with pupils on such things as relationships with others and also helping families with social problems. There is good liaison with parents and external agencies. Within this supportive environment pupils develop well personally.

Academic support is less strong. Arrangements for supporting pupils with learning difficulties are just satisfactory with appropriate co-ordination of provision at an early stage. Pupils who do not speak English fluently receive some good support, but, with 19 languages spoken by children, the school cannot provide as much support as is needed.

Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is monitored well and they receive some advice on how to improve their work but this is not always detailed enough in all subjects. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, at this stage of the school's development are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. In the face of some recent challenges such as the threat of closure, a huge budget deficit and redundancies, she has provided a clear direction for the school community, keeping the well-being and improving the progress of pupils at the centre. However, overcoming the difficulties partly explain the early stage of development of some of the management systems within the school. The deputy headteacher is new in post, although he has started to have a positive impact on school improvement, for example, on coordinating the provision for learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The co-ordination of English and mathematics has developed well, but the coordination of other subjects is at earlier stages of development. Some staff are not yet involved enough in checking the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. The headteacher has taken a lead in evaluating and monitoring the school and she knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Pupils' and parents' views are taken into account when deciding what needs to be done to improve provision.

Governors fulfil their statutory requirements and key governors are supportive and involved with the school. However, it has not been possible to recruit a full complement of governors and governors are not evaluating the effectiveness of the school well enough.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, with some issues addressed well but others, such as the outdoor space for Reception children, still remain a focus for improvement. With the good leadership of the headteacher, a new senior leadership team in place and some of the external difficulties now resolved, there is good capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. It is good that you enjoy school and we think that you are all working hard in your lessons.

The things that we particularly liked were:

- Your headteacher knows the school well and is working hard to make it better.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class.
- The good relationships and the way you celebrate different faith festivals together.
- The good curriculum with some interesting after school clubs provided for you all to enjoy.
- The way the school gives you responsibilities, looks after you and cares for you all equally well.
- How much your attendance has improved.

We have asked your teachers and the governors to improve the following things to try and raise standards, which are not yet high enough in English and mathematics:

- Make sure that your teachers provide work for you which is interesting and challenging and gives you more chances to use computers.
- Involve all staff and governors much more in trying to find ways to make your school better.
- Introduce better ways to find out how well all of you are doing in each subject.

Thank you again for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope that you will carry on enjoying your lessons and helping your teachers to make Lowfield Community Primary School even better!