



Lower Heath CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123483
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281487
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 7 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mike Capper RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Prees
School category	Voluntary controlled		Whitchurch
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Shropshire SY13 2BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01948 840524
Number on roll	80	Fax number	01948 840524
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Delwyn Davies
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Cathy Rutherford (Acting)

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 7 December 2005	Inspection number 281487
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small primary school is situated in a hamlet in north Shropshire, with pupils coming from a widely dispersed rural community. Pupils are taught in mixed- age classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. There are more pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities than in most schools. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the reception year varies from year to year but is broadly average overall.

The school has been through a period of significant turbulence owing to staffing problems. Long-term sickness and bereavement mean that there have been three acting headteachers in the last year, with the current acting headteacher taking up post at very short notice in September 2005. There has been an almost complete change of teaching staff in the last six months.

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 that provides sound value for money. The school is improving rapidly under the very clear direction of the acting headteacher, who has quickly established an accurate picture of school effectiveness. Her evaluation of how well the school is doing is confirmed by inspectors. When the acting headteacher started she rightly identified achievement as being satisfactory. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress, but the lack of additional adult support restricts the range of activities that can be offered at any one time and this sometimes slows the pace of learning. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average and they make satisfactory progress from their starting points, though good teaching is accelerating progress in the current year. Almost all teachers are new to the school and they are meeting pupils' needs well. Standards in writing consistently lag behind those of other subjects, although there has been some recent improvement, with pupils being given more opportunities to write purposefully in different subjects. Pupils' personal development and their care and support are good. Consequently pupils are happy, enthusiastic and confident. They behave well and enjoy coming to school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has only recently begun to evaluate rigorously how well it is doing and the use of information about pupils' learning to set targets and to track progress is in the early stages of development. Nevertheless, the acting headteacher has very high aspirations for the school and these are shared by all staff. As a result, there have been many good recent developments that mean that the school is moving in the right direction and is in a secure position to make future improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to give pupils more opportunities to write purposefully in different subjects in order to raise standards in writing.
- Make better use of information about how well pupils are doing to set rigorous targets and to monitor progress over time.
- Review the use of teaching assistants so that there is more support available in the mixed-age, reception and Year 1 class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the reception class, and by the end of the reception year, their attainment is similar to that found nationally. Pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and they quickly learn to become independent.

In Years 1 to 6, standards are average overall in English, mathematics and science. In English, reading is stronger than writing. Test results in writing consistently lag behind those of other subjects. This weakness is evident throughout the school, with spelling and punctuation being the key areas that need improving. The school has made a promising start to improving writing by introducing a more structured approach to

teaching letter sounds and by giving pupils more opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum. Pupils' progress from their starting points in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, though good teaching is accelerating progress in the current year. It is too early for this improved progress to have had a major impact on standards and to overcome the unsettled education provided in the past year following high staff turnover.

There are no significant differences between the attainment and achievement of different groups of learners; those with learning difficulties and disabilities make sound progress.

The school sets realistic targets for individual pupils and these are largely met but they are not always challenging enough to ensure more than satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school. As one pupil said, this is 'because of the interesting things we do and the support we receive from staff'. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. They work hard, meaning that little time is wasted in lessons. Attendance is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils help each other and are keen to take responsibility. The work of the School Council is given a high priority, helping pupils to take an active part in school life. For example, pupils in Year 6 are writing a school prospectus for new pupils. There are adequate opportunities for pupils to contribute positively to the community by taking part in local events and raising money for charities. Through these activities, pupils show a genuine concern for the well-being of others. Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and they know how to stay safe. They speak enthusiastically about the opportunities they have for physical activity in lessons and clubs. Pupils' sound basic skills and their good levels of confidence prepare them suitably for the next stage of their education and eventually for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most teachers are new to the school this year, and their good work is helping pupils to make better progress than in the recent past. In the reception class, good teaching of personal, social and emotional development helps pupils to develop new skills quickly.

Throughout the school, pupils are expected to work hard and purposeful activities such as writing about their hobbies help to make learning interesting and relevant. Teachers meet differing needs well and generally have good expectations of what pupils should achieve, though there is an occasional inconsistency in expectations in writing which slows the pace of learning for some pupils. Nevertheless, in other lessons

there is good challenge. Written targets in each classroom and the teachers' marking of work clearly identify to pupils the next steps in their learning and help them understand how they can improve. This is another strong indication of improving provision across the school.

Teaching assistants are hard working and enthusiastic and give good support to pupils when they are working with groups. However, they are not always used effectively during whole-class sessions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Recent initiatives such as giving pupils more opportunities to write purposefully mean that there is now a good focus on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy, though the pace at which computer skills can improve is sometimes slowed by limitations in resources. These are currently being updated. In the Foundation Stage the curriculum is carefully planned, though the lack of additional adult support restricts the range of activities that can be offered at any one time.

Pupils are taught effectively about healthy living and how to keep themselves safe. The school provides a good number of out-of-school activities. Pupils of all ages take advantage of the many after-school clubs run by members of staff and other adults. These have a good effect on pupils' academic and personal development by giving them the chance to work together in teams and to learn new skills. Pupils' learning is further enlivened by sound links with the community and visits to places of interest. For example, pupils spoke very enthusiastically of a recent visit to Shrewsbury Abbey.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a happy school with a welcoming atmosphere where pupils feel secure and safe. There are good arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Parents rightly speak highly of the care provided for their children during the sad events of the last year, when a member of staff died. Inspectors agree that the quality of support offered to pupils at this time was outstanding. All members of staff continue to show a genuine concern for pupils' well-being. Child protection procedures are secure and the school works very closely with outside agencies to safeguard the well-being of pupils who may be at risk. Academic support is satisfactory. Members of staff have a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs, but systems for setting targets or evaluating pupils' progress over time are not yet fully embedded. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are detailed and are regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the school's effectiveness having been adversely affected over the last year by staffing difficulties. However, under the

strong and purposeful leadership of the acting headteacher, who has been well supported by the Chair of Governors, the school has made a very good start to addressing weaknesses. There have been many recent developments that are beginning to have a good effect on pupils' learning. For example, subject leaders have been given much more responsibility and they are now taking a more active role in monitoring their subjects.

The acting headteacher has accurately evaluated current school effectiveness and her judgements are matched by inspection findings. She has rightly identified the need to strengthen the way that the school uses data to monitor pupils' progress so that weaknesses can be identified and dealt with more quickly. The school actively seeks the views of parents and pupils to support its self-evaluation. For example, parents have recently been consulted for their opinions about the impact of improvements to accommodation. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the school, and are particularly appreciative of the way that the school has maintained its caring family ethos despite the changes in leadership.

Despite the many difficulties the school has faced over the last year, members of staff and governors work together well as a team. There has, vitally, been a fast pace to developments this term. This has led to rapid improvement and the school is now in a secure position to improve further.

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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	3	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	3	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	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

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

Lower Heath CE Primary School Prees Whitchurch Shropshire SY13 2BT

7 December 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly.

What we liked most about your school

- We are very pleased that you enjoy school and behave so well.
- The school is good at teaching you about the importance of staying safe and healthy.
- Your teachers are very kind and caring. They look after you well and make school fun.
- Teachers are helping you to learn well this year.
- Your acting headteacher, teachers and governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- We have asked the teachers to help you to learn even more quickly in writing.
- We feel that it would be helpful to have more grown-ups to help the youngest children in Class 1.
- We think the headteacher and governors need to make more use of all the information they have about how well you are doing.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn, and we wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Capper Additional Inspector