



Lower Meadow Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133484
LEA Sheffield
Inspection number 282311
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Bill Keast CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Batemoor Road
School category	Community		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		S8 8EE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2372700
Number on roll	285	Fax number	0114 237 8572
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Munro
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Jan O'Connor

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Lower Meadow Primary School was formed in September 2003 through the amalgamation of two schools. It is larger than many primary schools with 285 pupils. It has a nursery. Situated to the south of Sheffield, it serves an area with significant social and economic deprivation. A well above average proportion of pupils - one third - is entitled to a free school meal. Approximately one quarter of pupils is identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and the proportion with statements of need is well above average. Children come to the school with well below average attainment. The school has a unit for profoundly deaf children which is the only one in the area to provide a signing environment. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The current headteacher was appointed in June 2005 and the deputy in November 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to this bright and welcoming school because they feel safe and well cared for.

The school effectively meets pupils' personal needs and celebrates their contribution to the school community. Attendance is rising but is still low. Standards are also rising but results remain significantly below national levels. However, with the good start provided in the Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory progress from their well below average standards at entry to the time they leave. Teaching is satisfactory, but staffing changes have meant that strengths of teaching have not yet made a big enough difference to standards. The curriculum meets pupils' needs, extra-curricular activities are good and the school promotes a healthy lifestyle well. Pupils' learning and behavioural needs are supported well, particularly for those with hearing difficulties, but managers have not ensured that all groups of pupils with learning needs and/or disabilities are closely monitored.

Staffing difficulties have meant that management systems are not as well established as might be expected after two years. These difficulties have been resolved and the new leadership team has tackled identified weaknesses with vigour. Leadership and management are as yet only satisfactory because these new initiatives have not been in place long enough to have had full impact. Resources have been used effectively to promote change and progress and the school provides satisfactory value for money. This school has not been inspected before but improvements since the appointment of the new headteacher indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

To continue to raise standards the school should:

- ensure that pupils make good progress by setting and monitoring targets
- ensure that the strong teamwork established in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is extended through Key Stage 2
- ensure that the planned actions are carried out consistently and fully and that their impact is carefully evaluated
- ensure that all groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are closely monitored so that their needs are best met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' standards when they join the nursery or Reception are well below average and many pupils have particularly low literacy skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, although varying from year to year, remain well below average. Very few pupils are above the average expected of pupils of this age. In 2004, standards at the end of Key

Stage 2 were exceptionally low with below average results in mathematics and science and exceptionally low results in English. More pupils reached higher than expected levels than at the end of Key Stage 1 but still significantly fewer than nationally. The progress that pupils made by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2004 was broadly average overall given their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Progress was good in mathematics but was less than expected in English. All groups of pupils made average progress when compared to similar groups nationally. Results in 2005 showed improvement at both key stages with particular improvement in reading at Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stage 2. The school did not meet its targets, set before amalgamation, for this group of pupils, but their achievement was better than for previous pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and they enjoy school. They have a clear understanding of the richness and diversity of world cultures, respect for others, and the difference between right and wrong. School rules are very clear and the new system of rewards motivates pupils well. Pupils behave well around school and are courteous and friendly towards visitors. They respect their teachers, want to please them, and understand that they are at school to learn. Despite a rising trend, attendance remains low with the school working hard to make further improvements.

Children work safely and understand how to keep healthy, with events like the 'Healthy Eating Week' increasing their knowledge. Their participation in the good range of sporting activities helps them to keep fit and understand the spirit of friendly competition. All pupils are fully included in school activities and the hearing impaired unit adds a rich dimension to the school's life that benefits all its pupils.

Pupils actively contribute to school developments through an effective school council linked to class councils. They learn to listen to others and to argue a case. Team working skills are developed through, for example, technology days. Older pupils take responsibility and develop their social skills and relationships well through being playtime helpers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and it has many good features. Stimulation and challenge in good lessons leads to pupils enjoying their learning and making good progress. These lessons are carefully planned so that work matches pupils' needs well. Teachers use good questioning skills to develop pupils' thinking and extend their understanding. Good relationships between teachers and pupils build confidence and trust so that pupils do not fear making mistakes. Learning and progress are only satisfactory when teaching is not sufficiently challenging or stimulating. Pupils make

better progress when they know what they are expected to learn in a lesson and this learning is checked later on, than when they are just told what they are going to do. Teachers in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 work effectively as teams in planning together and sharing good practice but this is not yet a strong enough feature in Key Stage 2. Staffing changes have meant that the teams have not been together long enough for the teaching strengths to have had an impact on standards. Marking which includes guidance so pupils know what is needed to make their work even better is being developed. This is not yet happening in all areas.

Teachers know the needs of their pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well and plan appropriate work. Pupils with hearing impairment and those for whom English is an additional language receive good additional literacy and basic skills teaching in small withdrawal groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A satisfactory curriculum meets pupils' needs and statutory requirements. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. Developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are appropriate priorities. A programme of personal, social and health education places a strong emphasis on a safe and healthy lifestyle and is complemented well by a series of focus days. These regular themed days or weeks contribute effectively to pupils' learning in a wide range of subject areas. For example, a creative arts week led to pupils' work being exhibited at The Sheffield Children's Festival. Strong links with the nearby secondary school broaden the curriculum by teaching French and Italian to all pupils in Years 3 to 6 and Chinese to some in Years 1 and 2. Residential visits for pupils support their social development well. After school opportunities are limited but sporting activities involving specialist coaches enrich the curriculum well. Currently, a small number of additional activities provide extra challenge for gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, and some aspects are good. Good relationships between pupils and adults help ensure that all pupils feel safe and that there is someone they would turn to if they needed help. Behaviour is closely monitored. Incidents of bullying and other forms of harassment are dealt with firmly and effectively. Recent developments in behaviour management are proving effective. Individual behaviour management plans support some pupils well. Policies on child protection are thorough and procedures secure and procedures for risk assessment are good. A strong caring ethos is evident in all aspects of the school's work.

Well-trained teaching assistants provide high quality support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils from the hearing unit and those with severe physical disabilities are well supported so that they can be included fully in all that the school has to offer. A sharper focus on regular assessment of pupils' work leading

to target setting and monitoring of progress has recently been introduced but has yet to have an impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since its creation, the school has experienced continual change in teachers, particularly at senior level. This situation has been resolved. Staffing has stabilised and a new and strong leadership team is in post. Systems and procedures delayed by these changes are now in place. The leadership of the new headteacher is good. A shared vision for the school, based on its mission statement and focused on raising attainment, has been established. The role of subject leaders is being developed. Management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is variable and has not ensured that all groups of pupils are closely monitored. Due notice is taken of parents' and pupils' opinions. These contribute to the accurate self-evaluation through which the school and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Action has been planned to tackle identified weaknesses and much professional development is being undertaken. While some actions have had an effect, many have not yet had time to show their full impact. Governance of the school is good. Governors have ensured the school meets all statutory requirements. They are actively involved in developments and showed good leadership in the process of appointing a new headteacher. Resources have been used to good effect. In a short time, the current senior leadership has shown that there is a good capacity to improve further.

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	4	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?	3	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?	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	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	2	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	2	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

First of all, thank you very much for welcoming us to your school so well. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and finding out about the things you like doing and what your school is doing for you.

We found that your school gives you a satisfactory education and that it is a happy and caring place in which to learn. You say you enjoy coming and we saw that you worked hard and behaved well. You get on well together and are kind and helpful to each other. You particularly get on well with those who have hearing problems and some of you are learning signing so that you can understand each other even better.

We think your teachers look after you well and teach you well how to look after yourselves and your bodies.

It has not been easy in the first two years of your new school. After the many changes we think the school is more settled and that you have a good headteacher. She knows what needs to be improved in your school and how to go about getting that improvement. You will know many of the new things she has introduced. Your teachers are working with her to make sure that you learn as well as you can and that you are prepared well for the next step in your education.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that they carry out all they have planned to do because we think they are the right things. We have asked them to make sure that you learn as well as you can by setting you targets and regularly checking on your progress. Your teachers are working well together in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 and we have asked them to work as closely in Years 3 to 6. Finally we have asked them to check carefully and make sure that all those of you who have learning difficulties have work that is well suited to your needs.

You can help your teachers to help you by continuing to work hard and, for some of you, coming to school more regularly.

We wish you well in the future.