



Ladysmith Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113081
LEA Devon
Inspection number 285595
Inspection dates 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006
Reporting inspector Anthony Shield AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Pretoria Road
School category	Community		Exeter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Devon EX1 2PT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01392 255554
Number on roll	469	Fax number	01392 496603
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Jackson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ladysmith Junior School is a larger than average junior school situated in an urban area close to the centre of Exeter. In 2005, the school was reorganised from a middle school and half the pupils were new to the school in September. Most pupils attend the adjacent infant school before joining. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. Most pupils are White British, with very small numbers of pupils from other ethnic heritages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve and significant improvement is required in relation to: the overall achievement of pupils, and especially in mathematics; the quality of teaching and learning; and the use of assessment information to aid planning.

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate because pupils' progress is inconsistent and by the end of Year 6 it is inadequate, particularly in mathematics. As a result, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money. Although the school evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory, it accurately recognises that standards are not high enough. By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. The school's recent reorganisation into a junior school and the appointment of a new headteacher have brought a renewed sense of purpose and energy. The headteacher has articulated a clear way forward and is taking staff, governors and parents with her. As a result, although the school has not made enough progress since the last inspection, it has made strong improvements in recent months, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. However, these have yet to make a significant difference to pupils' achievements, except amongst the younger pupils in Years 3 and 4. These pupils, all new to the school in September, are making satisfactory progress.

The school's strengths include the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils and the maturity of the oldest pupils. Pupils get on well with each other and good relationships ensure pupils feel safe and valued. Although teaching is improving it is inadequate overall because it does not always make enough demands on pupils particularly in Year 6. This is because assessment and feedback in lessons, including marking, do not tell pupils how well they are doing and how they might improve. Consequently, teachers' planning does not always build on pupils' prior attainment or set sufficiently challenging tasks. Expectations are not always high enough. The school has much to build on and good practice to share.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and knows the next steps required to bring about improvement. For example, the recent rigorous approach to monitoring and planning is beginning to have a positive impact on learning in some classes. Consequently, the school is well placed to improve further. However, data from assessment is not used at a school level to set targets and monitor progress towards them. The contribution of leaders and managers at all levels to school improvement is inconsistent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievements, particularly in mathematics, so that they make more rapid progress through the school.
- Remedy the weakness in teaching, in all year groups to ensure it challenges pupils and builds on their prior attainment.
- Improve

the use of assessment information to monitor pupils' academic progress through analysing individual learning needs, setting targets and ensuring that planning better matches pupils' individual needs. • Improve marking so that pupils know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' attainment on entry is a little above average in English, mathematics and science. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are not high enough; they are average in English, and slightly below average in mathematics and science. This shows that pupils' academic progress through the school is inadequate, particularly in mathematics. In 2005, when national test results in all three subjects declined sharply, pupils whose prior attainment was average and those who were less able underachieved in both mathematics and science. Evidence from this inspection indicates that most pupils of all abilities, including the more able and some with learning difficulties, are not making enough progress, particularly in Year 6.

Standards in English are closer to what is expected for the pupils' ages than in mathematics and science. Pupils could still do better, however, particularly in standards of writing and presentation, issues which the school is beginning to address. Although the school has worked hard to improve basic numeracy skills the impact of the various interventions is not yet fully evident during the year and achievement in mathematics remains too low.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4, all of whom joined the school in September 2005, achieve satisfactorily as a result of action taken by the school. However a legacy of underachievement remains for the older pupils, particularly those in Year 6. The school did not achieve the 2005 targets, which were not set at a particularly high level and it is unlikely to achieve the 2006 targets. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good because of the school's atmosphere of care and respect. This encourages pupils to develop into sensible young people. They understand abstract ideas such as friendship well, exploring these sensitively in lessons and assemblies. Pupils' contributions to help the disadvantaged are wide-ranging. Good cultural development is recognised through the prestigious Artsmark Gold award, with music and art being particular strengths.

Pupils enjoy their education and behave well. Positive attitudes assist learning and pupils work and play together harmoniously. Attendance is average and improving. Pupils feel very safe in school and comment that there is little bullying. Many are confident to discuss their personal problems with peer mediators. These are Year 6 pupils who take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils make a positive contribution to

the school community through such opportunities. They have a growing awareness of the wider community through links with a school in Uganda. Physical education and enrichment opportunities such as outdoor activities on Dartmoor enable pupils to stay fit and healthy. One pupil commented on returning from Dartmoor: 'We had such a great time, especially wading through the mud!' School meals offer healthy choices, which pupils enjoy. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future working lives and cooperate particularly well in teams.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall because a significant proportion of pupils do not make enough progress over time. Lessons seen during this inspection were satisfactory overall. However, evidence indicates that as pupils progress through the school, they achieve less well than expected because teaching is inconsistent. This is because teachers' planning is not based on accurate assessments of pupils' previous work. Teachers' expectations, especially in mathematics, are too low. In addition, feedback on how well pupils are doing is not precise enough to let them know how to improve. Marking is often supportive but unhelpful because pupils do not know what they must do to improve. Pupils' untidy work is rarely remarked upon by teachers and too often work is unmarked.

As a result of recent initiatives on rigorous monitoring and feedback, the quality of teaching is improving, particularly in Years 3 and 4, where pupils are progressing satisfactorily. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are clear about what they expect pupils of different abilities to learn. Lively and well planned activities capture the pupils' interest and develop their independence and confidence. These characteristics were all demonstrated in a good Year 3 lesson in which pupils were led to an understanding of computer simulations. Recent investment in new technology has brought considerable benefits for both teachers and pupils and is being used with increasing effectiveness. Teaching assistants work effectively with groups of pupils who need additional support. All teachers manage their classes well, and alongside good relationships and the good attitudes of the pupils, create a positive climate for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and provides a satisfactory range of activities. The school is committed to providing time for a range of different subjects and to make links between them. This has already started in Year 3 and there are plans to extend this further next year. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are well met because teachers plan work carefully and support them sensitively. The curriculum is less well planned when teachers fail to take account of pupils' attainment in their

planning, and as a result, work is not always set at the right level. The school conscientiously prepares pupils to be good citizens and encourages them to be healthy and safe. The curriculum is enhanced by residential visits and local studies. Pupils enjoy activity weeks and look forward to their end of term performances. The curriculum is further enriched by a satisfactory number of out-of-school clubs particularly in the arts and sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has a very strong commitment to the care and support of its pupils, and as a result care, guidance and support are satisfactory. This is reflected in the good relationships and strong sense of a caring community. For example, half the pupils were new in September, but because of the sensitive and close attention given to individuals, they settled quickly and happily. Vulnerable pupils are swiftly identified and pastoral support for them and their families is good. Experienced teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties effectively. Staff commitment to pupils' welfare is shown in the way pupils are carefully shepherded across the road to the canteen. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are robust.

Academic guidance is less well developed. Although the school assesses pupils' attainment regularly, it has not learnt to make effective use of data to help pupils. The school does not intervene effectively to identify underachievement or set challenging targets for pupils to ensure they achieve their potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, and the recently appointed headteacher has renewed the school's sense of purpose. Following a period of uncertainty as a result of the school's reorganisation into a junior school, the headteacher has worked effectively to establish a new identity and to halt the sense of drift. Most importantly, the headteacher has retained the confidence of parents, who recognise the contribution she has already made. As one parent commented to inspectors, 'Mrs Jackson has been a breath of fresh air.....we are very impressed with her leadership, positive nature and attitude to both children and their parents'.

A number of sensible initiatives designed to improve teaching and raise standards have been introduced. These are beginning to make a difference to pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 and 4. However, more time is needed to address fully the underachievement of pupils. The headteacher is well supported by her deputy headteacher and most staff, but the contribution of some subject leaders and co-ordinators is uneven. However, necessary action has been taken and plans to reorganise the senior team and some subject responsibilities are already in place. As a result of the action taken by the new headteacher and the support from the senior team and governors, the school has the necessary capacity to improve.

There are good procedures for checking on the quality of teaching that are already making an impact on raising quality; however, this is not yet evident in all year groups. Other monitoring procedures are in place and this has enabled an honest and realistic analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff, parents and pupils have been consulted and fully involved in developing school self-evaluation. Despite the wealth of assessment data being collected, it is not being used effectively to set challenging targets and track pupils' progress. The school improvement plan is an effective tool and priorities are appropriate. Governors are increasingly involved and playing a more effective role in both strategic planning and monitoring, including the budget. Legal requirements are met.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	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

19 May 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking about your work in school. I know you will be interested in what we thought about your school.

What we liked most about your school

- The school is a happy community and you told us you feel safe.
- You work hard and are keen to do your best.
- You behave very well and are friendly and polite to your teachers and each other. You look after each other well.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that teachers keep a close check on how well you are doing, and help you all achieve as well as you possibly can, especially in mathematics.
- Make sure that all teachers always let you know how well you are doing and how you might improve.
- Make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Good luck in the future!

Yours sincerely

Mr Tony Shield Lead Inspector