

Lowther Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102892
Local Authority	Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number	286518
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr S Thorne
Headteacher	Mrs P Henchie
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2002
School address	Stillingfleet Road Barnes London SW13 9AE
Telephone number	020 8748 3984
Fax number	020 8846 9334

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and serves the immediate local community in North Barnes. Pupils come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is higher than most schools nationally, and the proportion eligible for free school meals is also high. A significant number of pupils leave or join the school in the course of the year. Whilst the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly similar to the national picture, the number with statements of educational need is higher than in other schools. There is a Nursery which admits children on a part-time basis from the age of three.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lowther Primary is a good school with some outstanding features. It has a strong family atmosphere and is at the heart of its local community. Particularly strong features of the school are the exceptionally high level of care and guidance provided for pupils and the very good leadership and management. One parent wrote, summing up the views of many, 'Lowther's strength is to be a caring and supportive environment'.

Each individual pupil is valued and respected. As a result of very good pastoral work, pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and want to do well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well so they gain confidence and value and respect the needs of others. They have a clear understanding of behaving sensibly and safely as well as an outstanding grasp of what makes for a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils behave well, although in some lessons they can be a little restless for a short time.

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 2, they have made good progress and reach standards that are just below average, having started Nursery with skills well below those expected. Good teaching and a range of very good additional support ensure that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, they reach well above average standards in science, above average standards in mathematics and average standards for English. The school has worked hard to improve standards in English, especially in writing. After experimenting with a variety of approaches they have achieved modest success. However standards are still lower than those attained in mathematics and science. Drama excites pupils and they use their imagination well and transfer their ideas into writing. This is at an early stage but has already had some impact on writing standards.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide a wide range of learning experiences for pupils. Teachers are developing good skills in linking subjects of the curriculum with interesting projects. Assessment information is used well in the school and has recently identified the need to provide more challenging work for pupils of middle ability. Some teachers' good practice in managing small behavioural problems are not shared by others. This sometimes results in lack of concentration among pupils, which could be better managed.

The pastoral and academic guidance given to pupils are significant strengths. Pupils feel safe, are encouraged to develop confidence and have a strong sense of being part of a community. Through their charity initiatives, hard work in literacy and numeracy, and the rich experiences they gain in extra curricular activities they are extremely well equipped for life beyond school.

Leadership and management are good although the headteacher provides outstanding leadership, working in close partnership with her deputy and the other staff. There is a very clear vision for the school, which is leading to measurable year on year improvement ensuring that pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. Strong links with home are fostered and parents kept well informed about all aspects of their children's development. Subject teams monitor and focus with increasing skill on all areas of the curriculum. Governors are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school and provide a very effective balance of support and challenge. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent. Children typically start school with skills and abilities very much lower than those normally expected of three and four year olds, especially their language skills. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception because their needs are identified and addressed quickly. Strong links are built-up with parents, and staff work hard to ensure they are fully involved in their child's development. Activities, both inside and outdoors, are planned well to promote a range of skills. However, not all children reach the expected levels by the time they move to Year 1. Very good emphasis is given to improving language and social skills so children develop confidence and their communication skills grow. The quality of care and supervision is very good so children are happy and enjoy their first experiences of school. Leadership and management are very good and all staff work closely together. They are careful not to let the problem of distance between the two Foundation Stage areas diminish the strength of the team or quality of the provision. Transition to Year 1 is sensitively planned so children move happily to the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching throughout the school by sharing the good practices that are prevalent in a number of lessons especially in behaviour management.
- Strengthen the provision of English, especially by developing writing skills, so that pupils achieve as consistently well in English as they do in mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well during their time in the school. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. At the end of Year 2 standards have improved and for English are similar to those achieved nationally except in writing where fewer pupils achieved level 2. At the end of Year 6 progress is exceptionally good in science where results attained over the past three years are significantly above the national average. In mathematics the results have steadily improved and pupils now make very good progress. At the time of the last report standards in writing were identified as an area to improve further. The school has worked with determination to make some improvement in writing and English generally. They are now meeting with modest success as shown by their recent test results. In order to improve the standards attained in Year 6 further there is a focus on close monitoring of progress between Years 2 and 4. This enables any underachievement, en-route to Year 6 tests, to be identified at an early stage. The improving standards in all subjects together with the high quality of support for pupils helps ensure they move to the next stage of their education as well-prepared and confident learners.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like school, attend regularly and they show great enjoyment in their lessons. The school is a harmonious community; one appreciative parent wrote, 'the school has a lovely atmosphere where children feel comfortable and confident to learn'. Relationships at all levels are of a high quality based on mutual respect. Social skills are very well developed and lunch and break times are enjoyable social occasions. Behaviour is generally good and managed well in lessons. However, sometimes pupils can be restless and inattentive for short periods and this hinders

the progress made in some lessons. Pupils are very clear on how to live a healthy life and be safe. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures. They are clear that they have a contribution to make to their school, and bullying or name-calling is rare. They have good opportunities to express their ideas about school and feel they are valued. Responsibilities are accepted with pride and older pupils undertake important roles, for example as school ambassadors.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a good learning atmosphere in all classes. Opportunities for talking and listening, carrying out investigations and sharing ideas based on paired and group work are used well. Planning of strong links across subjects to make lessons more interesting is developing through the school. For example, a Year 4 project on Africa developed from the school's links with a school in Uganda. It focused on an African story, an understanding of the geography of the area, and design and technology when pupils built a model village. In the best lessons, there is good pace and challenge in the work provided so that all pupils are fully involved. However, a few lessons are too leisurely and the work provided, especially for the middle range of ability, is not always sufficiently challenging. Marking is thorough, guiding pupils in how to improve their work. Well trained learning support assistants work in a strong partnership with teachers. They help to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those at the early stages of learning English, are very well supported so they make the same good progress as other children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and so they make good progress. Music and drama are very popular with pupils and often well linked to other subjects, especially literacy. It is drama that has provided the key to the improvement seen in writing skills throughout the school. Pupils explore ideas and extend their language in drama and then move enthusiastically to writing tasks. Information and communication technology is well integrated into lessons and pupils develop good skills. In the last report, regular and careful monitoring of all subjects of the curriculum was identified for improvement and this has been well addressed. An outstanding feature of the school is the enrichment provided by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Sports activities are numerous and enjoyed by all year groups. Extensive use is made of the abundance of facilities in London, and pupils enjoy trips to museums, theatres and galleries. Visitors such as storytellers and musicians make learning exciting and stimulating. The school is generous in sharing its resources, by extending learning activities and clubs with parents and the community of North Barnes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know pupils' needs well and assign a high priority to their care. Pupils feel confident that they can seek help when they need it. Procedures for child protection and pupils' safety are very good. Attendance is good and has improved because the school works hard, using the innovative Cool Cats scheme, to ensure that pupils attend regularly and promptly. Excellent

use is made of an extensive range of professional support outside of school to extend the care for pupils. Strong pastoral care ensures pupils feel settled and ready to work. Guidance in their learning is also good because efficient use is made of assessment information throughout the school. Pupils have clear targets and understand what they must do to improve their work. As a result, the need to challenge pupils of middle ability has been recognised and is the current focus for the school. Pupils with identified needs are assessed quickly and a carefully integrated network of support, often interlinking with external agencies, meets their needs very well. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as those for whom English is an additional language, achieve as well as other pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy form a strong partnership and their complementary skills provide inspirational leadership. Monitoring systems are thorough, and evaluation of both provision and standards is used well and regularly reviewed. Subject management, organised on a team basis in line with the school's ethos, allows groups of staff, under a subject leader, to monitor and promote improvement. This innovative approach is developing well but requires further monitoring to ensure its effectiveness, especially in promoting higher standards in English. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Support staff work closely with teachers and help ensure that pupils' achievement and enjoyment are promoted well. Resources throughout the school are used effectively to support learning. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and not complacent, thus providing a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It takes good account of the views of pupils and parents. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Governors have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide the school with an extremely high quality of support and effectively challenge the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowther Primary School, London, SW13 9AE

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we came to your school. We really enjoyed our time with you. You and your parents told us that your school was good and we agree with you.

We really liked the very happy family atmosphere we found and we saw that you all get on well together and are polite and kind to one another. Everyone works hard to make sure that you are well cared for and safe in school. You all understand about keeping safe and what you need to do to be healthy and have a healthy diet. We thought you enjoyed your lessons and wanted to do as well as you could.

We also found that a number of your lessons were well planned and gave you the chance to work in pairs and groups. You like to act things out, share ideas and put down your thoughts in writing. Your work is well marked and you are given lots of guidance with targets and advice from your teachers that will help you to improve your work.

We were especially pleased to learn that you have good opportunities outside the school to take part in lots of clubs and go on really interesting trips. You enjoy these activities because they are fun but they are also an important part of your learning. Mrs Henchie and the other leaders in your school are doing a wonderful job in making sure the school keeps improving.

Even though your school is good, we think Mrs Henchie, the staff in school, your parents and you would like it to be even better. There are two things we have asked the staff to improve:

That all your teachers make all the lessons really interesting so that you can make the best possible progress with your learning.

Help you do even better work in English, especially writing, so that you do as well in English and writing as you are doing in mathematics and science.

Thank you again for making our time in your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball