



# Lowton St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 106486  
**Local Authority** Wigan  
**Inspection number** 287524  
**Inspection dates** 27–28 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Margaret Lewis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Newton Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Lowton, Warrington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Cheshire WA3 1EW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 769710
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	229	<b>Fax number</b>	01942 769710
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs E Smith
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is an average sized school. Pupils come from mostly White British backgrounds with a very small proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils have English as an additional language. A below average number of children are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has a few looked after children. An above average proportion of pupils are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A below average number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has recently begun to offer before and after school and holiday care. The school's part time Nursery is housed in Victorian building a short distance from the school. Building of a new Foundation unit for Nursery and Reception classes is due to commence very shortly. Children join the Reception class from a number of local nurseries with generally below average attainment. A new deputy head and assistant headteacher joined the school recently.

## 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. Inspectors confirm the school's views of itself. Pupils like coming to school and attendance and punctuality is good. It is a caring school where every child matters and is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils are guided and supported well. Parents are very supportive in their fundraising and have mostly positive views about the school. They appreciate the help it gives to their children although a significant proportion of parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school could keep them better informed and take their views into account. Pupils' personal development is good but on occasions the behaviour of a small number of pupils at the lower end of Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Children start in the Reception class with attainment overall below that expected for their age. Test results in 2005 show that by the end of Year 6 pupils reach broadly average standards although results in English are much higher than the national average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching in the Reception class and in Key Stage 1 is consistently good. In the Nursery and in Key Stage 2 although satisfactory there is less good teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and succeed well. Monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress is good. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and governors have managed a difficult period of rapid changes in staffing over the past two years extremely well and have maintained its strengths. During this time the headteacher was without a permanent deputy head and senior staff for extended periods and some developmental work suffered. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. Governors have made some wise decisions and appointments and the school is now well placed to improve further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 engage in their learning and behave appropriately at all times.
- Work more closely with parents and take their views into account.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Results in 2005 and unpublished results for 2006 show that pupils make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. In 2005 pupils did exceptionally well in English. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was significantly above the national average although fewer pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics and science. The school has identified this and is addressing the progress of the more able pupils in these subjects. Results in Year 6 for 2006 showed a similar picture. Children in the Reception class make good progress and by the end

of the Reception year reach the levels expected of them. Pupils continue their good progress in Years 1 and 2 as they learn the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who find learning difficult receive good help and support. In 2005 test results for Year 2 show that pupils attained above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Results for 2006 show that standards are rising in Key Stage 1 in reading and writing but that fewer pupils are reaching the higher levels in mathematics. Pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are achieving satisfactorily. In 2006 the school broadly achieved its targets at Level 4 and missed them in mathematics and English at Level 5. The school is currently working towards challenging targets for pupils at Year 6 and is putting further strategies in place to achieve them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school as can be seen in their attendance, which is above the national average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on their lives and actions because of the strong links with the community and regular cultural events. Although the vast majority of pupils have a positive attitude to learning, the behaviour of a small number in Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory. The school council, having designed the playground, continues to contribute to life in school in a number of ways. This includes the organisation of regular fundraising and, of late, the designing of a vegetable garden in the school grounds. The buddy system and well organised yard and play areas encourage pupils to adopt safe practices around the school grounds. Life skills are developed in a number of ways including involvement in a 'mini enterprise' project at the end of Year 6, the use of an election process for posts of responsibility in school and the writing of applications by children for those posts.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Staff changes and absences over the past two years have had an adverse impact on the quality of learning in some classes and particularly in pupils' progress in mathematics and science. Nevertheless, teaching is satisfactory. Improvements to the stability and quality of teaching are beginning to raise standards and achievement throughout school especially in the quality of pupils' writing. In the Foundation Stage teaching is better in the Reception class, where it is good, than in the Nursery where although satisfactory it is less imaginative. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are motivated and work well. Lessons are brisk and well organised and teaching assistants are well directed. Lessons in Key Stage 2 do not always enthuse and engage pupils enough to make them settle and tackle work effectively. Some teachers set high expectations of behaviour and are skilled at promoting it. This is not always the case. There are times when teachers have to work hard to get all pupils to offer answers to their questions and contribute to

discussion. Teachers and support staff work closely together to provide a supportive learning environment across the school. This helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous but marking is not always useful enough to help pupils improve and more could be done to encourage them to present their work neatly.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of the Foundation Stage curriculum is variable. Although teachers plan the areas of learning for children of this age, the resources and the quality of the learning environment in the Nursery are not as good as in the Reception class. In Key Stages 1 and 2 regular themed weeks, visits and the use of modern foreign language specialists contribute to curricular enrichment. Systems for gifted and talented pupils are under development but are not yet fully in place. A good feature of the curriculum is the provision for health education and as a result pupils show a good awareness of the issues around healthy lifestyles. Music, too, is a strength of the curriculum with all pupils having the opportunity to work and perform regularly with tuned and un-tuned instruments.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils. Procedures and safeguards for the health and safety of children are rigorous. Child protection systems are in place. Pupils are well supervised and staff ensure that they are safe. Pupils generally feel safe and are confident that there is an adult to turn to if there are any issues of great concern to them. The majority of pupils understand how they need to improve and can use their individual targets to gauge their own progress. Pupils with additional learning needs are well involved in setting their own learning targets and this contributes well to their progress. Rigorous assessment systems provide the detailed knowledge that staff need to adapt the curriculum to pupils' needs. The school works well with parents and other agencies to help their children make good progress and the majority of parents are happy with what the school provides. However, a significant number of parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school does not take account of their views and suggestions.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and governors have maintained the strengths of the school during an extremely demanding period. The leadership of the school is successfully focused on promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils and is effectively tackling raising standards. All pupils are valued highly and good efforts are made by staff to help all to succeed. After an extended and difficult period of staff changes and absences the headteacher

and recently appointed senior management team have established a good rapport and work together effectively as a team. Teaching is monitored rigorously by the headteacher and school self evaluation is accurate so that the school knows what it needs to do next to improve. Pupils' performance is regularly and carefully checked. A good contribution to pupils' progress is made by teaching assistants who are deployed well. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory and the school shows a good capacity to improve further. The school has successfully improved the accommodation for pupils in Key Stage 2. It is now embarking on the next phase for a new build for the Foundation Stage to replace the out of date building used by the Nursery and to provide a cohesive Foundation unit. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors are very supportive and closely involved with the work of the school through regular visits, links to curriculum subjects and aspects of the school's work. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	2
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**

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school this week. We want to thank you for being so helpful and for talking to us.

Here are the things we think are best about your school:

- just as your school logo says the school believes in ' Nurturing you in education' and you are looked after very well by all the staff
- you enjoy coming to school, have good attendance and are on time
- you are very polite and helpful to visitors and most of you behave well
- you know a lot about healthy eating and keeping fit and choose your food carefully
- your headteacher leads the school well and keeps a good eye on how well you are all doing.

These are the things we think could be better:

- some lessons could be even better and this would be helped if all of you, particularly those in Key Stage 2, took more interest in your lessons and behaved well all the time
- we have asked the school to make sure your parents always get the school newsletters and know what is happening so that they can ask the school any questions and give their views to the school.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful when we came to see you.