



Larklands Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112708
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289380
Inspection date 27 February 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Park Road
School category	Community		Ilkeston
Age range of pupils	3-7		Derbyshire DE7 5DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0115 932 4288
Number on roll (school)	222	Fax number	0115 932 4288
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs S Haydon
		Headteacher	Mrs C L Goulding
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group 3-7	Inspection date 27 February 2007	Inspection number 289380
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school serving the town of Ilkeston. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need are both similar to those found nationally. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a very small percentage is at an early stage of acquiring English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Larklands is a good school that gives good value for money. Pupils and parents are proud and appreciative of the quality of education provided. As one parent commented, 'My children love coming to school. I would recommend this school to anyone.' Under the good and influential leadership of the headteacher, the school does not rest on its laurels. A good track record of constantly moving forward and a readiness to face new challenges enthusiastically, indicate a strong capacity for continued improvement.

Assessment data indicates that attainment when entering Nursery is below national expectations. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and vibrant provision that results in standards being close to national expectations by the time pupils are ready to start in Year 1. The good teaching is again evident in Years 1 and 2 because it captures the interest of the pupils and there is a good recognition of the necessity to adapt teaching to meet the differing learning styles and needs of pupils. It is these qualities that help pupils achieve well and to attain good standards by the end of Year 2. Whilst assessment is good overall, the information is not organised in the most effective way to have the best possible impact on how well pupils achieve.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils feel valued by staff because of the strong sense of family and community that wraps around the school. However, despite the best efforts of the school, there remain a minority of pupils who do not attend school regularly and results in the school's attendance rate being below the national average. Pupils behave well and often very well, and are enthusiastic learners. This is helped in no small measure by the good range of curriculum activities on offer. The opportunities for pupils to learn through exploration, investigation and collaborative activities alongside the good teaching of basic skills, help to prepare them well for the future. Pupils have a good awareness of what is needed to keep fit, safe and healthy and are always ready to make telling contributions to school and community life. The good levels of care and support on hand for all pupils help build up their confidence and self-esteem, and, when given guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, they show great maturity in acting on it.

Leadership and management of the school are good because the headteacher, the senior management team, subject leaders and governors all play their part in effectively monitoring and evaluating the work and performance of the school and in securing improvement when needed. There is a strong sense of community cohesion which is enhanced by the school's readiness to take on board the views of pupils and parents. The school's self-evaluation paints an accurate picture of just how well it is doing but at the same time articulates what is needed to take it on to the next level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Collate test and assessment information in a more coherent manner to give a better overview and more accessible picture as to how well pupils are achieving as they move through the school.

- Explore further strategies aimed at ensuring that all parents and carers send their children to school as often as they should.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities and ethnicities achieve well. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Attainment when pupils start in the Nursery is generally below national expectations. Good teaching and a range of vibrant learning activities throughout the Foundation Stage means that by the time that pupils start in Year 1, standards are around the expected level. Good teaching continues in Years 1 and 2 and this together with the readiness of the headteacher and staff to adapt learning methods to meet the changing and diverse needs of pupils attending the school, forms a winning combination in the continued good progress that all pupils make. Test and assessment data for 2006 shows standards to be a little above average by the end of Year 2. The challenging targets for 2007, which are on track to be reached, indicate that standards are securely above average, particularly in writing, which has been an identified area for improvement over the last two years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the very good relationships between pupils and adults, pupils' readiness to look out for one another, their self-discipline and an increasing awareness of cultures other than their own. Pupils behave well, often very well, and have an infectious enthusiasm for their work. However, despite the continued and concerted efforts of the school, attendance rates are below the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and about healthy eating and stated, 'We know we have to do a lot of sport because it keeps us fit.' Pupils relish opportunities to carry out tasks and responsibilities around the school and participate enthusiastically in local and national fund-raising events. This gives pupils a real sense of contributing, and, together with the good development of pupils' basic skills, is helping to prepare them well for the future. The recently introduced school council is primed to give pupils an increasing voice in school and has already tested out gardening tools in readiness for the school's quest to grow its own plants and vegetables.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The consistently good teaching across the school lies at the heart of the good progress and achievement of all pupils. Teaching is challenging and well planned and what pupils are to learn is shared with them and then reviewed at the end of the lesson. All

staff work hard at developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem and good analytical open-ended questioning keeps pupils on their toes, although just occasionally when the pace drops some pupils lose interest. Teaching assistants make a telling contribution in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as their classmates. Staff go the extra mile to adapt their teaching methodology to match both the academic and emotional needs as well as the learning styles of different pupils. Regular and reflective monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and subject leaders makes an important contribution to maintaining the quality of teaching, tackling any weaknesses and disseminating good practice. Good procedures are in place for regularly assessing pupils' attainment. However, the information is not organised in the best possible way to provide an effective overview of how pupils are progressing in each year and to more easily spot any dips in progress should they occur.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum strikes a good balance between the teaching of key skills and learning through practical and investigative activities. It motivates and enthuses pupils and builds on their previous skills well. This starts in the Foundation Stage and continues its vibrant journey through Years 1 and 2. The systematic planning for the development of a range of writing skills, and capitalising on writing opportunities across the curriculum, have seen writing standards rise. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to solve problems and experiment in mathematics and science, although opportunities to test out pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects are sometimes missed. On the other hand, pupils regularly use computers to enhance their learning in other subjects. Regular drama and the introduction of philosophy onto the timetable are examples of how the school consistently reviews its provision in, for example, its identified need to improve pupils' speaking, thinking and decision-making skills. Good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education develops their understanding of what it is to be healthy and an early understanding of good citizenship and community spirit. The school enriches the curriculum in an appropriate manner through visits, visitors, themed days and after-school clubs and the school is already looking at extending provision so that pupils' knowledge and awareness of the wider world is further enhanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, well-being and support for all its pupils and this is recognised and greatly appreciated by parents. As one parent commented, 'Staff are quick to recognise if a child has a problem and then act on it.' All staff know pupils well and the individuality of the pupils is celebrated. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and for child protection are effective. The strong links with outside support agencies ensure that pupils who may need extra help, be it academic, personal or social; receive the necessary support. The school provides good academic support for pupils. Discussions with pupils indicate that they have a good awareness of their

general academic targets, and this is enhanced when marking of their work clearly tells them what they need to do to improve, but this good practice is not yet as consistent as it should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school at all levels play a pivotal role in the school's many successes. The headteacher has successfully moulded together a staff who feel valued and who share her continued commitment to ensuring all pupils achieve well. She leads the way in always wanting to drive the school forward and regularly canvasses the views of pupils and parents. There is no sense of complacency and an ongoing readiness to adapt to the changing needs of the pupils and the community that the school serves. The senior management team and subject leaders provide good support and play an influential role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and in data analysis which has led to improvements in standards in writing and science. The school's self evaluation paints an accurate picture of the school's strengths as well as outlining initiatives aimed at tackling weaker aspects of school life. The need for more regular work scrutinies, for example, is an accurately identified area for development to provide staff with an even sharper insight into teaching and pupils' achievement. Governance is good because governors are supportive yet challenging and have a good grasp of the school's performance but are keen to continue to develop skills to enable them to monitor the work of the school in the most appropriate manner.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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?	2

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.

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	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

28 February 2007

Dear Children

Larklands Infant School, Park Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 5DR

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to many of you and appreciated the way that you were only too ready to share your views about your school. You told me how much you enjoy school, how many of you feel proud of it and importantly that if on the rare chance that bullying does occur, you feel very confident that it will be dealt with quickly and sensitively.

You will be pleased to hear that I think Larklands is a good school. Teaching is good, provides lots of exciting learning activities and helps to make sure that you achieve well. Your headteacher runs the school well and together with all staff, makes sure that you are well looked after, are happy and safe and that you are encouraged to keep fit and healthy. Another strength of the school is you! You behave well, are keen to do well and it is obvious that you find learning fun.

To make the school even better I have asked the teachers to do two things. One is for teachers to check more closely on the progress that you are making. The second is for the school to continue to tell some parents and carers how important it is for their children to attend school regularly so that they do not miss out on all the exciting things going on.

Mrs Goulding, the staff and the governors want the school to get better and better. Having met you, I am sure you will want to play your part by continuing to behave well, attending school regularly and continuing to enjoy all you do. I wish you every success for your future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead Inspector