



Lowton Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106421
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 295495
Inspection dates 12 June 2006 to 13 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Margaret Lewis CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newton Road
School category	Community		Lowton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Warrington, Cheshire WA3 2AW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 673213
Number on roll	114	Fax number	01942 673213
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr B Dutton
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Silcock

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 12 June 2006 - 13 June 2006	Inspection number 295495
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and is situated in the town of Lowton, Wigan. Pupils are taught in a Reception class, and 3 mixed aged classes. Almost all pupils come from a white ethnic background and no pupil has English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has the occasional child who is looked after. An above average number of pupils are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A higher than average proportion of pupils join the school part way through mostly in Key Stage 2. The school is working towards a Healthy Schools Award and a Silver Eco Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lowton Junior and Infant School is a good school, which gives good value for money. It has a warm and welcoming atmosphere where pupils are exceptionally well cared for. This helps them to achieve and make good progress despite their below average starting point. The school's own evaluation of itself is modest in several areas, such as the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and other activities, the care support and guidance pupils receive and the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher provides good leadership that is resulting in rising standards and strengthening achievement. Senior leaders have high expectations of the school's work and the school improvement plan prioritises clearly what needs to be done. The quality of teaching and learning is good as is pupils' personal development. Pupils behave well both in and out of lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Their knowledge of recycling, conservation of water and how to keep healthy is very good. The curriculum is adapted well to meet pupils' interests and needs. It is especially strong in the creative areas such as art and design, drama and music although a lack of practical and investigative activities in science and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for learning across the curriculum hamper achievement in these subjects. Pupils feel safe and looked after and enjoy coming to school. Punctuality is good and pupils attend regularly. Attendance is sometimes marred by unavoidable outbreaks of illnesses. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good and pupils make good progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 they are well prepared to begin the National Curriculum. Parents are highly delighted with the work of the school. The school has dealt satisfactorily with weaknesses from the last inspection and improvement has accelerated since the appointment of the current headteacher. It has a good capacity to make further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards the school should:

- improve the curriculum and the teaching and learning in science across the school to include more opportunities for practical and investigative activities
- improve standards of attainment in ICT at Key Stage 2 and give pupils throughout the school more opportunities to use ICT across subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All groups of children achieve well. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In 2005 standards dipped in mathematics to be below average for pupils in Year 6. However, the school has recognised this and put very effective strategies in place so that standards are now rising. There is no significant underachievement between the different groups of pupils. This is because in this school every child matters and individual progress is very carefully monitored so that staff know exactly how well each child is progressing.

Children start in the Reception year with below average standards, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, language and literacy skills and physical development. They make good progress in the Reception class and adapt well to school with most reaching the standards expected of them by the time they begin Year 1. They build well on this good start and reach average standards in writing and mathematics and above average standards in reading by the time they leave Year 2. Progress in Key Stage 2 is at least satisfactory and improving, although school data show that it slows in Year 3. Pupils from Reception to Year 4 reach average standards in ICT but those in Years 5 and 6 who missed out on past developments have a deficit of skills so that standards are below the national expectation. The school meets its challenging targets and exceeded these in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2005.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and these make a significant contribution to the pupils' progress. They behave well in lessons and in the playground and have good attitudes to learning and work well to do their best. All enjoy being in school. They develop good positive relationships with each other and staff. Any bullying is dealt with effectively. One pupil wrote that 'Lowton Junior and Infant School is Simply the Best'. Attendance is satisfactory and getting better because of the importance the school places on maintaining and improving it. In the current year outbreaks of communicable illnesses has affected staff and children and has had a significant adverse effect on rates of attendance.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and the school involves them in many worthwhile activities for example, visiting the elderly and fundraising for charities such as, Dr Barnado's, and international disasters like the Tsunami. They are developing good attitudes towards healthy living and caring for the environment as is evident in the work done and their involvement in re-cycling and water conservation. Pupils are aware of the dangers to health caused by smoking and drug abuse. Enterprising initiatives such as making and selling items for craft week contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is especially good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. In these classes teachers are particularly aware of how young children learn. Teachers plan lessons well and work is generally well matched and relevant to the pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a good level of support and high flyers extend their learning

effectively. High expectations of behaviour, along with plenty of praise encourage the pupils to try their best at all times. Relationships are good and this underpins pupils' learning and achievement. The small group organisation and teaching in Key Stage 2 aids pupils' progress. Marking does not always inform older pupils sufficiently well of how they can improve their work. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for practical investigations in science to make lessons interesting and help pupils think as scientists. Recent staff training in the use of ICT is having a good impact on teachers' confidence and pupils' learning. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to promote learning and engage pupils' interest in most classes, however, the use of ICT skills is not planned sufficiently well to support subjects of the curriculum and this adversely affects standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers push forward pupils' learning successfully with probing questions to make them think and understand the purpose of their tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. It is tailored to fit the particular needs of the pupils and all groups of pupils are served well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and good individual plans prepared and applied. The school has recently audited the curriculum and successfully re-planned it to encapsulate a themed approach on a two-year cycle to make learning the most enjoyable. Statutory requirements are met. Good provision is made for English and mathematics. The provision for the creative arts, in particular art and design, literature, drama and music makes a strong contribution to pupils' self esteem and the school's learning environment. This is seen in the excellent standard of displays and in the imaginative use of a sensory courtyard used for storytelling and reflection. Insufficient practical activities are planned for in science and the use of ICT is not yet in place in many subjects. Curriculum enrichment is very good and pupils benefit from a series of educational visits, including residential visits for the oldest pupils and from specialist visitors into school such as ceramic artists and storytellers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding area. The work of the school is exemplary in the way that it involves parents in their children's learning and in its work with outside agencies. This ensures that all pupils make good progress and are given very good guidance and support. Staff use secure systems to keep an extremely close check on pupils' academic and personal progress and take prompt action when factors arise that could spoil their continuing development. Pupils' safety is paramount at all times and pupils receive a high level of individual care. Any child who has difficulties or could be vulnerable is identified and sensitively and effectively supported. Child protection arrangements are robust and risk assessments are in place and under a cycle of constant review by senior staff and governors. Pupils benefit from trusting relationships with adults helping them to feel safe. The school takes excellent steps to ensure a safe and

supportive environment and is active in planning for pupils' futures and in particular for their transition to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of learners. The leadership of the headteacher is good. She has the confidence of staff, pupils, governors and parents. Since taking up her post she has created a common sense of purpose amongst staff who work very closely together. The creation of two senior staff teams, one for standards and one for pastoral care is instrumental in achieving this and in training and in directing subject leaders. The school takes into account pupils' views within the well-established school council. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school's work. Self-evaluation is considerably enhanced by seeking, taking account of and acting upon of the views of parents, and pupils. The clear way that teachers' personal targets are linked to priorities in the school improvement plan, for instance, in ICT ensures that the whole school pulls together effectively to make changes. Planned improvements are carefully monitored and checked. The continual focus on all staff developing their professional skills makes success in achieving further improvement all the more likely. Staff promote pupils' personal development and well-being extremely effectively and this creates a happy environment where pupils thrive and achieve well. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They plan strategically for the future. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Financial planning is good. Governors provide good support and work effectively for the benefit of pupils, staff and parents. These factors illustrate the strong commitment the school has to improvement and reflect the school's good capacity to move forward.

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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?	2	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	2	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	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	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

Thank you for the welcome you gave me during my recent visit. I was impressed by how sensible and friendly you are and the pride you take in your school, especially in the playground, courtyard and corridors where you display the wonderful artwork you have produced. The information and views you and your parents gave helped me a great deal in understanding your school. The main things I found out during the inspection were.

- Your school provides you with a good education. The care it provides is outstanding and helps you feel special and to do your best. One of you wrote that, 'Lowton Junior and Infant School is Simply the Best'.
- You enjoy school, behave well and work hard for your teachers.
- You get on well with one another and with adults and especially enjoy all the lunch time activities provided for you in the playground and after school.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe and your knowledge of looking after the environment is excellent.
- Teachers plan topics and lessons very carefully to make sure you learn new things and acquire useful skills.
- Your headteacher runs your school well and is very clever. She knows exactly how each one of you is doing and how much progress you are making.

To make things even better I am asking your headteacher and teachers to make sure that you have more opportunities to make practical investigations during your science lessons, like real scientists do, and that you get to use the computers more.

I was sorry not to have more time to talk to those of you who left last Monday on your residential visit to the Lake District. I am sure you had a marvellous time!