

Longton Lane Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104777
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	308666
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Doyle
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Maggs
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Longton Lane Rainhill Prescot Merseyside L35 8PB
Telephone number	01744 678343
Fax number	01744 678349

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school situated in an area of mixed local authority and private housing. Most pupils live close to the school, but some travel from a neighbouring local authority. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a small number from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. A few speak English as an additional language. An average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained the Activemark for its sports provision and is a Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Longton Lane is a satisfactory and improving school. Standards are rising and are above average. When children start school in Reception, their skills are as expected for their age. They make good progress, in response to good teaching, so that they enter Year 1 with above average skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' progress is satisfactory at both Key Stages 1 and 2 because in Years 1 to 4, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is best for pupils in Years 5 and 6, enabling them to make good gains in their learning. Standards have improved at both key stages since 2005 because the school has been sharply focused on raising achievement. The setting of more challenging targets remains a priority for school leaders in order to raise achievement and aspiration further.

Pupils enjoy their learning and appreciate the friendliness of the adults and pupils. They feel safe and well supported in school. A small number of parents are concerned about behaviour but, in fact, the pupils behave well and are unfailingly courteous and polite. The school is working hard to alter these perceptions through improved communication and more parental involvement. Pupils of all ages show impressive independence and confidence, which help them to learn. Good quality relationships between pupils mean that group and paired work is particularly effective in many lessons.

Sound teaching ensures that lessons are generally appropriately planned to cater for most pupils' varying needs. The challenge for the more able pupils, and in particular, those in years 3 and 4, is not always effective enough. Most lessons feature a range of practical activities to engage pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and contribute readily. Where there is good teaching, pupils are effectively challenged and teachers have high expectations of them. Consequently, they listen well, work hard and learn more effectively. Although teachers' day-to-day marking is generally satisfactory, they do not always make it clear enough to pupils what they need to do next in order to improve.

The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' progress and personal development. Recent changes provide pupils with opportunities to do more interesting and challenging work. Some good examples of this were observed in a Spanish lesson where pupils were excited by fast-paced, practical activities. Safeguarding of pupils is taken seriously and procedures for their care are appropriate. The school's systems to promote care and consideration for others are effective and lead to pupils' good behaviour and attitudes.

The school understands its strengths and weaknesses, although it judged its provision for the care, guidance and support of the pupils too generously. This is because there are some relative weaknesses in the academic guidance given to pupils. A large deficit budget three years ago has been significantly reduced thanks to careful budgeting by senior leaders and governors. Governors are increasingly challenging and very supportive of the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money, has the capacity to improve further and has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly in the Reception class because they are welcomed and reassured. They flourish as a result of the good care and attention they receive, becoming confident and absorbed in their learning. Lessons are stimulating and challenging and children make good progress in

nearly all areas of their learning. Children's physical skills are not as well developed, however, because the outdoor area is under-resourced and there is little play equipment for children to use. Skilled staff work very well together as a team. Their detailed assessments and good quality plans ensure that children learn to share and to work independently. For example, they use computer programs to support their mathematical learning, and to write invitations in the role play 'party' area. Parents are consistently involved in their children's learning, for instance through their contribution to their child's entry profile and regular discussions with staff about how well their child is progressing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 4 and of target setting in Years 3 to 6, so that all pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Ensure that pupils are aware of how well they are doing in their work and precisely what they need to do in order to improve it.
- Improve the outdoor play provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' performance in English is particularly strong, especially in reading. Almost half attain Level 5 by the end of Year 6 and pupils relish reading for enjoyment as well as for a purpose. Pupils enjoy writing stories and, as a result, they attain well in this aspect of literacy. However, standards in persuasive and factual writing are not quite as good. Standards in mathematics are above average and pupils relish investigative work. This is reflected in their work in science, but there is sometimes a lack of challenge, particularly for more able pupils, in this subject. Consequently, standards are average in science. Expectations for pupils' achievement are higher for older pupils than they are elsewhere in the school, which results in them learning at a faster rate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development, particularly in their social skills. They have a good knowledge of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, especially in keeping physically fit. Attendance is good and improving. The school has worked successfully to raise the attendance of the small number of pupils who have difficulties attending regularly or on time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall and includes strengths in pupils' moral and social development. Their cultural awareness is developing through work on other faiths and cultures and visiting theatres and museums. There are, however, limited opportunities for spiritual reflection and for pupils to think for themselves. Pupils are enthusiastic fundraisers for local and national charities. As a result of their membership of the school council and participation in the 'Playground Friends' scheme, pupils develop responsible attitudes in preparation for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is best for those in the Foundation Stage and for older pupils, where it is exemplified by clear explanations and high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Consequently, the pupils know what is expected of them and have to think carefully about how to approach their tasks. Teachers provide an interesting and demanding range of activities, make good use of practical resources and deploy teaching assistants particularly well. This ensures that pupils work hard and thoroughly enjoy learning. In other classes, teaching often has a slower pace and makes fewer demands, particularly on the more able pupils. This leads to learning which is satisfactory, rather than good. Some teachers mark pupils' work diligently, giving them clear information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is not carried out consistently in all classes. Where it occurs, it helps pupils to progress well. When it is missing, pupils' achievements are not so strong. There is also an inconsistency between classes, particularly at Key Stage 2, in how challenging the targets set for pupils' improvement are.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has recently been revised so that it better matches pupils' interests and enthusiasms. This is beginning to lead to improved achievement in Years 1 and 2, but it is only at an early stage for pupils in Years 3 to 6. There is a satisfactory range of additional sporting and creative activities on offer to pupils. Visits to museums, country parks and the theatre bring the curriculum to life. Inspectors agree with pupils' views that the library could be more accessible to enable them to enjoy reading or doing homework at lunchtime and after school. Teachers use ICT well to enhance learning and to help to raise pupils' standards. There are satisfactory arrangements for transition so that pupils are appropriately prepared to enter both Year 3 and their secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and supported sensitively. The best support for pupils' learning takes place when teaching assistants and teachers plan lessons together. In these lessons pupils, teaching assistants and teachers are all involved and focused. Occasionally, teaching assistants are under-used and opportunities are missed for them to be an integral part of the lesson. There are effective systems to ensure pupils' good behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Systems to track how well pupils are progressing are generally effective. However, in Years 3 to 6, the information gained is not always used well to set pupils challenging enough targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders have a clear vision for improving the school based on raising achievement and promoting effective care and pupils' good personal development. A relatively new senior leadership team

has revamped the curriculum to spread the good practice present in the Foundation Stage throughout the school. A new system to check on pupils' progress is effective in identifying underachievement but, as yet, senior leaders have not been successful in enabling all teachers to use this information to enhance pupils' achievements. An increasingly sharp focus on setting and achieving more challenging targets is at the heart of the school's agenda. This is supported by effective links with the local authority and attendance officer and additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Leadership is now shared with middle managers, who take responsibility for whole-school improvement in the quality of pupils' care and their achievement. There is a noticeably peaceful and harmonious atmosphere in the school, modelled by the headteacher's calm and regular presence.

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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Longton Lane Community Primary School, Prescott, L35 8PB

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for the way you welcomed us to your school. You were very polite and keen for us to talk to you. You are well behaved and a credit to your school. We were particularly pleased with the way some of you act as 'Playground Friends' and help each other. We were also glad to know that you understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, especially through keeping physically fit.

Your school is satisfactory and is getting better. You reach standards that are generally above average in English and mathematics and you do especially well in your reading. However, some of you could do a bit better in science, where your standards are not so high. You enjoy your lessons, especially when you are doing practical activities. The children in the Reception class do well because they are well looked after and excited by their learning, becoming confident and absorbed in their tasks.

You need to be given more difficult work in some classes in Years 3 to 6. Some of you said that you would 'like to do harder work' and I agree with you. You all need to know how well you are doing in your work and exactly how to improve it even more. You could help by asking your teachers how you could make your work better and by working hard. The younger children need more large toys to play with because they need to learn how to use them.

Thank you again for your help and I wish you all the very best for your future.