

Lowton West Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106428
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309124
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen Mulgrew HMI

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	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Blewitt
Headteacher	Mr John Howarth
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Slag Lane Lowton Warrington Cheshire WA3 2ED
Telephone number	01942 724865
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress that pupils make; their personal development and well-being; the quality of teaching and the quality of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's own assessment and tracking records; policies and minutes; observations of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils, a governor and the local authority adviser; and the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Lowton West is a larger than average school in a mixed socio-economic area, with the percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal half the national average. Most pupils are from White British heritage. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below the national average.

The school has received the Wigan Quality Standards award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lwton West provides an outstanding quality of education. The headteacher's excellent leadership has successfully created a positive partnership between pupils, parents, staff and governors. Together they rigorously check on all aspects of the school and decide what action to take to improve performance. As a result, the school has made very good progress since the last inspection and has excellent capacity to improve further. The school enjoys a good reputation in the community and parents value and support its work. One parent summed up the comments of many stating, 'Lwton West is a remarkable school. It is ambitious and creative in its methods of learning. It encourages engagement from pupils, families, carers and also the community in its entirety.'

The excellent care, guidance and support given by all staff result in pupils feeling safe and secure. In this supportive environment, all groups of pupils develop skills and attitudes necessary to work and play together harmoniously. The school considers carefully the needs of its vulnerable pupils and provides them with very good personal support. The above average rates of attendance reflect pupils' enjoyment of school. Comments such as 'This school is great' and 'I love everything about it' reflect the regard pupils have for their school. They feel it to be an exciting and happy place to learn. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic, extremely well behaved and willing to persevere. As a result they develop into confident, sensible and mature young people. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils reflect on the wider issues of life and are successfully encouraged to accept responsibilities for their own personal development and that of others. Older pupils take delight in organising activities for the younger ones at lunchtimes. They write prayers, which they share with other pupils in assembly. Celebrations such as harvest and carol services give pupils the chance to join with the wider community at the local church. Pupils organise events to raise money for charity as well as their school. For example, pupils are working with parents to raise money for a mini bus for school visits.

Relationships at all levels are excellent and as a result, pupils feel safe and confident that someone will listen to them if they are troubled. Consequently, pupils learn well and achieve very high standards in their work.

Pupils understand the benefits of taking regular exercise and eating a balanced meal. They take part enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities and appreciate the healthy lunches provided by the school. At the time of the inspection, 70 pupils were involved in a cross-country run during the lunchtime. Elected members of the school council are proud of their position. They present reports to the governors, are clear in what they want for the school, and achieve it. For example, new play equipment for use at lunchtimes was provided after the council requested it.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic, know their pupils well and provide learning activities that are of interest to them and challenge them to think. This is especially so in mathematics lessons; for example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were given a fun activity that involved identifying the answer to a problem read out by another pupil. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and teachers track the progress of pupils carefully and effectively. As a result, pupils have a clear picture of the quality of their work and know exactly how to improve it. Teaching assistants work effectively with individual or groups of pupils. The curriculum is good, with provision for mathematics particularly strong. In this subject, pupils

are organised into sets and teachers further refine work to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has recognised that the standard in writing can be higher and has taken action to tackle this issue. For example, pupils are now organised into sets for English lessons. All pupils enjoy the variety of extra-curricular activities provided, including the many out-of-school clubs and visit to places of interest. The annual ski trip to Saas Fee in Switzerland is particularly appreciated.

Standards reached by pupils by the time they leave the school in Year 6 are very high and the progress that they make is excellent. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils do well because of the high level of support and well-targeted learning experiences they receive. When pupils join in Reception, what they know and can do is broadly as expected for their age, although it is less so in their communication skills. Children settle into the Foundation Stage, quickly becoming confident with the school routine, interested in learning and well motivated. Emphasis is placed on developing skills that promote an interest in reading, writing, and speaking and listening. Therefore, by the time they enter Key Stage 1 most pupils are working securely at the levels expected for their age, although this is less so in their writing skills. Pupils' progress accelerates as they move through the school with pupils consistently reaching well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. In 2006 tests, almost all pupils reached the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Furthermore, well above average numbers of pupils reached higher than expected levels in all subjects. The 2007 test results are slightly below previous years but school data shows that this was expected and that future classes are on line to achieve the challenging targets set by the school. To raise standards in writing even higher the school has identified opportunities for extended writing in all subjects.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and supportive deputy headteacher promote a clear vision of continuous improvement, which is embraced by the rest of the staff. Results of consultation are compared year on year to gauge the effectiveness of the school's actions. This brings about a confidence that the school is moving in the right direction. The last inspection indicated the need for subject leaders to receive training in checking the teaching and learning in their subjects and guidance on how to develop their subjects. The school has made excellent progress on this issue and now leaders play a significant role in the development of the school.

Governance is good. The chair of governors regularly visits the school and meets with the headteacher. As a result, she has a very clear picture of the day-to-day management of the school and is able to share this information with all governors. Governors contribute valuable expertise to different aspects of the school's development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality and standards in the Reception classes are good. At the time of the inspection, children were attending on a part-time basis. Parents greatly value the 'inspire' sessions organised during the summer term before children start school. These opportunities to visit the school result in a smooth, settled start for their children. Teachers quickly get to know their pupils and plan activities to excite and motivate them to learn. Consequently, children's improved self-esteem and independence form a strong basis for future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to develop their writing skills in all areas of the curriculum.

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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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

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

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. When I came to see how well you are learning you were very friendly and happy to talk to me. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing all your views about Lowton West. You are very proud of your school, and so you should be because it is an outstanding school. You told me your parents wanted you to go to Lowton West and they are very happy you are learning so much and becoming such sensible young people. I would like to tell you what I found out about your school.

- Your headteacher and all the staff want the very best for you.
- You all work hard and are very well behaved.
- You make excellent progress and by the time you are ready for secondary school you reach high standards in your work.
- You enjoy school very much, especially the fun activities your teachers give you.
- You know how to live a healthy lifestyle and take full advantage of the many activities out of lesson time.
- You told me that you feel safe and cared for by everyone in school.

I have asked your teachers to challenge you to get even better at writing by planning more chances to use your writing skills in lots more subjects. I know you will take on that challenge and work hard.