

Leigh CofE Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106516
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309151
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Mayes
Headteacher	Mrs S Howard
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
School address	Walmesley Road Leigh Lancashire WN7 1YE
Telephone number	01942 673889
Fax number	0

Age group	5-7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average primary. Approximately two thirds of the pupils live in housing around the town centre with the remaining pupils coming from nearby housing estates. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Approximately 25% of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties, with a larger than average number of these in the current Year 1. Children come from a large variety of pre-school settings and have below average skill levels on entry to the Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils flourish and make exceptional progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in their personal development because they are particularly well taught in this outstanding school. Their needs are well met by the excellent curriculum which offers expert tuition from all staff in the basic skills, like the learning of letter sounds. Also, exciting topics, which are often planned to be of special interest to boys, make exceptionally effective use of visits to places of educational interest and of the skills and knowledge of a wide range of visitors. Pupils enjoy school fully, are highly motivated to learn and are very well prepared for the next stage in their schooling.

The school, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, constantly reviews provision and seeks ways to improve further. As a consequence, it has maintained, and improved on, the very high standards and quality of teaching from the last inspection. This has come about partly because senior managers check pupils' progress in a very thorough way. They make very effective use of the information gathered to provide additional support when an individual pupil or small groups of pupils make insufficient progress. Subject coordinators have a good understanding of standards in their subjects. The outstanding governing body knows the school very well from formal and informal visits as well as discussions with parents and pupils. They use their varied areas of expertise to particularly good effect in moving the school forward. The improvement since the last inspection coupled with the high quality current leadership indicates that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school gives exceptional value for money.

Children start school with skills which are below those typical for their age. Very good induction procedures and effective teaching in the Foundation Stage help them settle in quickly and make good progress. Classrooms are places of exciting learning, but use of the outdoor area is less well developed. Pupils start Year 1 with standards which are in line with national expectations. They are well prepared for learning because their personal and social development has been promoted well in the Foundation Stage. Progress is very rapid for all groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in these subjects are very high and have been at this level for many years. The school does exceptionally well with boys, because they reach very high standards in reading and writing. From their varied starting points pupils achieve outstandingly well in this school.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. Pupils are happy and feel very safe. They have very positive relationships with each other and staff. Additional clubs are plentiful and go a long way to promoting pupils' understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Target sheets, coupled with teachers' explanations and marking, enable pupils to have an excellent knowledge of how to improve their writing further. From before children start school, staff work very effectively at establishing a partnership between home and school which encourages parents to be fully involved in their children's development throughout their time in the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with weak social skills. Their communication skills are below those typical for their age and they have little understanding of the wider world. Through good teaching

they move on quickly, so that by the start of Year 1 most are working within the early learning goals, thus attaining at the expected levels. There are exceptionally strong and valuable links with parents, and these, together with the very thorough induction arrangements, help children to settle quickly into school. Staff demonstrate good teamwork and effective procedures are in place to ensure that children's care and welfare have a high priority. Staff interact well with children using discussion and questioning to stimulate children's learning. A strong emphasis is placed on children's personal development so that children are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1. Teachers use assessment information well so that their planning takes account of children's individual needs. The indoor areas are stimulating and provide a relevant and appropriate focus on personal development and basic skills, as well as the wider curriculum. The outside area does not provide quite the same levels of challenge or stimulation. The school is well aware of this and has suitable plans in place to improve it. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor learning environment in Foundation Stage so that it is as challenging to children's learning as their classrooms.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Highly effective teaching and a stimulating curriculum help pupils make very rapid progress through Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been maintained at a significantly above average level for the last five years. Current standards in Year 2 are very similar. In the recent past the school made changes to the curriculum and since then boys have reached very high standards in reading and writing, which is in contrast to the national picture. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress. They benefit considerably from the very high adult to pupil ratio in English and mathematics lessons which allows for a great deal of individual support and personal attention. The school sets itself very challenging targets for the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 or Level 3 in the end of Year 2 tests and these are met or exceeded each year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. From an early age, pupils care for each other very well. For example, very good play leaders are keen to encourage younger pupils to join in games or play with and share the available toys. All pupils are eager to come to school because lessons are interesting and they have very strong friendships. They have an exceptionally clear understanding for their age of how to stay fit and healthy. For example, those having school lunch welcome opportunities to try new fruits and vegetables whilst those who have packed lunches compare their lunch with the well illustrated placemats showing the different food groups. Pupils say that everyone is very friendly and so they feel safe in school. They also have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in basic situations like on sunny days and crossing the road. Rates of attendance have improved since the last inspection and are currently above average, an indicator of how much both parents and pupils appreciate their school. Pupils' behaviour is good. In classes it is often exemplary.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Pupils experience similar high quality teaching across all classes and all subjects. Classes are managed very well so that learning can take place. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and use their expert subject knowledge effectively to set tasks which meet the learning needs of all pupils. For example, in the independent literacy set, equally challenging but slightly different tasks based on the Titanic story were given to pupils of differing abilities. Resources, including new technology, are used exceptionally well to give pupils extensive practical experience. For example, in the supported Year 1 mathematics set, four well planned activities used dice, coins and computers to help staff teach pupils how to add up money and give change. Skilled teaching assistants are used particularly well to ensure that groups are small so that pupils get the teaching they need. Also they deliver additional programmes to small groups with an identified need very skilfully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs of all the pupils exceptionally well. Effective programmes for English and mathematics, which are very well delivered, enable pupils to make rapid progress. Themes are carefully considered and often have content of special interest to boys, like the Titanic and the book, 'Dinosaurs and all that rubbish.' This has engaged them and helped raise standards. The emphasis on practical activities has led to greater enjoyment of mathematics and science lessons and more learning. Pupils' art work, as a result of good teaching and interesting 'art days', is of a very high standard and demonstrates the use of a wide range of skills and materials, and is beautifully displayed. Excellent use is made of the immediate locality and visits to further away, like Chester Zoo, to give pupils more experience and a wider view of the world. Pupils are enthused by the extensive range of clubs and activities, many of which help them stay fit and healthy. A very good programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils make good friendships, be aware of their responsibilities to themselves and others and know how to stay safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All pupils are very well cared for, guided and supported in their personal development and learning. The school has procedures for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. Links with parents, outside agencies and local schools are all used especially well to promote pupils' well-being. Parents are seen as partners in education and the beginning of the school day is a wonderful time to see this in action with parents interacting with their children, by, for example, looking at a picture or sharing a book. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to improve their literacy work through the individual discussions they have with their teachers and the very effective target sheet system which helps them aspire to the next target. The school recognises that this aspect is not quite so well developed in mathematics. The before and after school club and holiday activities are well attended, further demonstrating the lengths to which the school goes to provide its pupils and their families with extended services.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding teamwork is the key to this successful school. Everyone plays their part to the full in order that every child can fulfil their potential. Procedures to monitor pupils' progress are exemplary. They are used very effectively to identify any variations in progress and senior managers quickly put in place additional programmes to improve learning. The information is also used very well to set pupils and staff challenging targets. The quality of teaching and the curriculum are rigorously checked and support provided where necessary. For example, test results showed that boys' writing was not as good as girls' writing. In response to this the school developed a themed approach to English teaching based on specific books, many of which were chosen with the stimulation and engagement of boys specifically in mind. Resources, especially additional staffing, are very successfully deployed to increase pupils' progress. Governors carry out their duties very thoroughly. Many of them are frequently in school gathering information which informs their decision making so that they can hold the school to account for its actions. A very positive feature is that at the invitation of the school, they, along with parents, have observed lessons and so know what is happening in their school.

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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	1

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of Leigh Church of England Infants' School, Leigh, WN7 1YE

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we visited your lovely school recently. You and your parents told us that your headteacher and her staff run the school exceptionally well and make 'learning fun', and we agree. We think that your school is outstanding and the way you want to learn and the progress you make in literacy and numeracy lessons are outstanding too.

Here are some more things we think are outstanding about your school:

- your teachers and teaching assistants do an excellent job for you
- you are taken on many exciting visits
- everyone at school wants to keep you safe
- you know how to improve your work, especially in writing
- you enjoy exercise and have a try at new foods because they will keep you healthy.

One of the reasons your school is outstanding is that your headteacher and the governors are always looking for ways to make it even better for you. We have asked them to do the following to improve the school for you:

- make the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage an even better place for children to learn.

You can help your school by being on your best behaviour at all times and by continuing to try your hardest in every lesson and enjoying your time at your wonderful school. We thank you for your help during our inspection and the sensible way you shared your thoughts with us. We wish you and all at the school well for the future.