

Low Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107957
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309547
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Tilling
Headteacher	Mrs Sumpner
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Belinda Street off Church Street Leeds West Yorkshire LS10 2PS
Telephone number	0113 2141704
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Low Road is a smaller than average school in the Hunslet district of Leeds. Most of the pupils live in the local community and are of White British heritage. Since the previous inspection, the school has received significant support from the local authority (LA) and has federated with another local primary school, whose headteacher now oversees both schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. The school has the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. Parents are very supportive and say the school 'caters for every child's needs, emotional, physical and educational'. The governors' decision to federate Low Road with a local primary school, in autumn 2007, has resulted in an excellent partnership which has seen overall teaching and learning improve and pupils' standards rise. Much of this is due to the vibrant leadership of the headteacher who now oversees both schools. She has developed a strong team of teachers and support staff who work hard to create an inclusive environment in which all pupils feel valued and enjoy their learning.

Governors and senior leaders know the school well and have identified the right priorities to sustain improvement. For example, they recognise correctly that there is more work to be done to ensure that all pupils learn well in all lessons so that they make better progress, particularly across Years 1 and 2. They also know that pupils' standards and achievement in writing are not yet high enough across the school.

Most pupils start school with below average skills and make satisfactory progress maintaining below average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Those in Years 3 and 4 are making particularly good progress. Standards are rising, particularly in mathematics, with more and more pupils reaching national expectations by the time they leave the school. This is because the school now has more stable staffing, has improved much of the teaching and learning, and is using information about pupils' progress more regularly to tackle underperformance. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, the quality is inconsistent and it is not sufficiently challenging and stimulating in all classes to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Much has been done to improve the curriculum. It is now good and a significant factor in raising attainment. Many of the activities have links with the local community. This means that learning is more meaningful. The regular themed weeks, visits and visitors to the school help to make learning more fun.

Pupils' personal development is good. They have a good enjoyment of school, their behaviour is good and the vast majority attend regularly. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and they involve themselves well in the life of the school and the local community. They are adequately prepared for their future lives because of their improving information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy skills. The quality of care and guidance is good. The school provides helpful information so that most pupils understand the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The energetic and far-sighted leadership by the headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher and the chair of governors, is driving the school forwards. This has led to clear improvements in provision and standards recently and also since the last inspection. Parents recognise the quality of the work that is taking place. They say, 'The staff throughout the school are constantly striving to make it even better.' Consequently, there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Although group sizes are small and there is a spread of ability, the majority of children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. The communication and number skills of a significant number are particularly weak. They make satisfactory progress

across the Foundation Stage so that by the end of Reception most gain confidence to relate well to each other. Many learn to read adequately but their mathematical skills and knowledge of the world around them are below the levels typical for their age. The school's emphasis on children's social development starts effectively and, as a result, children know how to behave appropriately from an early age. Relationships are positive and staff participate regularly in children's work and play. Nonetheless, opportunities are missed to deepen children's thinking by more searching questioning and discussion, and activities are not always as engaging and challenging as they might be. The indoor and outdoor environments are well resourced and afford an appropriate range of learning opportunities. However, some of these are too directed by adults, rather than chosen by children. Satisfactory leadership means that staff work together as a team, providing levels of care that ensure that children feel happy in their play. The day-to-day assessment of children's learning plots their progress adequately in individual profiles but the information is not always used to full effect when planning activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in writing throughout Years 1 to 6.
- Improve pupils' progress in all subjects across Years 1 and 2.
- Ensure that all teaching is good or better to enable all pupils to learn as well as they can.

A small proportion of the 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

Most pupils make satisfactory progress from their generally below average starting points. Although the majority reach standards that are currently below average by the end of Year 6, an increasing proportion meet national expectations in English and especially in mathematics. Many pupils achieve well in science to reach below average standards by the time they leave school. Nevertheless, their rates of progress are uneven. The school's most recent information shows that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making particularly good progress. As a result, the standards they reach are broadly average. This is largely due to greater stability in staffing, a new curriculum that encourages 'hands on', meaningful learning experiences, as well as earlier support for pupils at risk of underperformance. However, in Years 1 to 2, pupils' progress is, at best, satisfactory. Standards here are below average overall and well below average in mathematics. This is because the teaching does not engage and challenge the majority of pupils as well as it might. Pupils' achievements in writing across the school are still too low. However, more creative approaches to writing, stimulated by speaking and listening activities and increasingly imaginative use of modern technologies, are beginning to make an impact. Pupils with significant individual learning needs also make satisfactory progress because they receive effective specialist support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They benefit well from a programme of themed weeks, assemblies and enrichment activities which provide regular opportunities to reflect on the lives of people from different countries and cultures. Most pupils show respect for each other and their behaviour, in lessons and around school, is good. They

say bullying is rare and that they always feel safe and secure. Pupils adopt thoughtful routines when working and playing together. In particular, 'befrienders' work hard in the playground to ensure that no child feels left out of the many activities on offer. In school, they work increasingly cooperatively and independently, sharing modern technologies effectively to enhance their learning. Attendance is broadly average and the importance of coming to school is well promoted by the parental support worker. Pupils are keen to take advantage of the many responsibilities on offer. For example, they enjoy their work on the school council, raising funds for charities, getting involved in local environmental projects and planning to sponsor a school in Africa. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of exercise and diet as part of a healthy lifestyle, and their developing ICT and basic literacy and numeracy skills mean they are adequately prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is particularly good across Years 3 to 4, leading to improving rates of progress by many pupils. However, this quality is not consistent across all classes and is, for example, satisfactory at best in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, not all pupils learn as well as they could. Relationships are positive and classrooms are stimulating places in which to learn. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons because they do interesting things and take pleasure in working alongside each other. In the best lessons, teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and find out things for themselves. They show examples of what a 'good one' looks like, so that all pupils understand precisely what is expected of them. Skilful questioning enables teachers to determine how well pupils are learning and what resources they require to sustain their 'hands on' learning. The planned activities are often linked to the local environment, so that the pupils see relevance in what they are doing. However, some lessons, particularly for younger pupils, are over-directed by the teacher and pupils' misconceptions are not always tackled directly. Activities are not always engaging and consequently some pupils do not make sufficient progress. Although teachers work hard to develop pupils' writing skills, particularly through drama and effective use of ICT, these skills are not yet high enough across the school. Overall, the marking of pupils' work is regular, celebratory and helpful in enabling pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Much has been done to transform the curriculum in a short period of time. Teachers have benefited considerably from the federated arrangements to plan jointly enriched learning experiences, drawing heavily on the local environment. Successful links between subjects ensure that pupils steadily develop key understanding while retaining a strong emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in art and are keen to point out the good quality collage, painting and ceramic work, stimulated by different cultures, in evidence around the school. However, not all pupils yet learn a modern foreign language. Visitors to the school and visits out of school, including residential for older pupils, are the norm. These enhance pupils' self-confidence and help to bring learning to life. Good personal and social development lies at the heart of the school's work. A range of enrichment activities, such as 'Around the World' and music days, popular clubs that include

street dance, gospel choir, endball and many sports, all help pupils to broaden their horizons and develop healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents and pupils appreciate the strong pastoral support provided. The positive relationships throughout the school help pupils to feel valued, as demonstrated by a typical comment that, 'All the adults care, it's that kind of school. I only wish I could stay here.' Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Academic guidance helps pupils to know increasingly what they are capable of. Pupils are becoming involved in assessing how well they are doing, and say their targets are helpful in showing them how they can improve their work. Systems to identify and support pupils with specific learning and behavioural needs are appropriate. Skilled support staff work in close partnership with teachers to provide effective support for these pupils. As a result, the school is increasingly well prepared to meet the whole range of pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Arrangements to federate the school under the dynamic leadership of a headteacher from a local school, have transformed pupils' learning in a very short time. The strong partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has resulted in a stimulating learning environment and an increasingly rich curriculum that responds to pupils' needs and is inspired by the local community. Much of this is new but is beginning to impact positively on pupils' achievement and standards. All staff speak positively about how they feel accountable for aspects of the school's work. The headteacher's enthusiasm and energy for change has ensured an increased focus on outcomes for pupils. Procedures to track their progress are effective and increasingly used by all teachers to pinpoint earlier those at risk of underachievement. Excellent use is made of the federation school, local authority resources and links with other schools, to develop and share good practice. Through its good self-evaluation the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and action plans identify the correct priorities to improve further its work. Challenging targets are used well by leaders to raise standards. Governors are highly supportive of the school, carry out their responsibilities effectively and are confident in knowing how well the school is performing.

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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?	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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

Inspection of Low Road Primary School, Leeds, LS10 2PS

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I really enjoyed talking with you and inspecting your lessons. It was good to see how friendly, kind and polite you are towards each other and to the adults who work with you. I was particularly interested to learn about all of the joint activities that take place with the pupils in your federation school. You all seem to get along so well with each other. I particularly enjoyed watching Year 6 editing the video footage that was shot with pupils from your partner school. The caring atmosphere in school, which helps you feel safe and happy, is one of its strengths. You know a great deal about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and taking regular exercise. Most of you attend regularly and arrive on time which helps you build on what you learn each day.

I know that many of your lessons are really interesting. The regular visits to places of interest, visitors to school and special events, like the 'Around the World' and music weeks help to make your time in school enjoyable. The recent environmental project, in which many of you were involved, helped you to understand better what happens in your local community. At the same time, your super art work and the work that the school council is undertaking to sponsor a school in Africa, give you an excellent insight into the lifestyles of people from different cultures and countries.

There have been lots of changes made recently to help you achieve better and reach higher standards by the time you leave school, but there is still much to be done. All of your teachers want your school to be a good place to learn and they are working really hard to ensure that it is the best it can be. At the moment, Low Road provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education. To speed up the improvements even more, I have asked the headteacher and staff to help you make much better progress in Years 1 and 2 and in writing throughout the school, so that the standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are much higher than they are now. I have also asked them to make sure that the teaching and learning in all lessons are as good as the best.

Thank you again for helping me with this inspection. I hope that you will continue to work hard and help your teachers, so that Low Road becomes an even better school in the future.