

Lofthouse Gate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108163
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309605
Inspection date	26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	James Kilner 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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Gill
Headteacher	Mrs B Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Canal Lane Lofthouse Gate Wakefield West Yorkshire WF3 3HU
Telephone number	1924 303110
Fax number	1924 303111

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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: pupils' achievement and standards; their personal development and well-being; the quality of care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation, questionnaires completed by parents, and through discussions with pupils, governors, staff and the headteacher.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified. Such assessments have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Lofthouse Gate is a larger than average sized primary school. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage and none are at the early stages of learning to speak English. A small number of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. Much smaller than average numbers are in receipt of a statement of special educational need and comparatively few are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has received a number of nationally accredited awards; Investors in People, Healthy Schools award, Activemark, Investors in Pupils and Artsmark Gold. It has received a local authority award, Inclusion Now.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lofthouse Primary is an outstanding school providing an exceptionally high standard of education. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. A clearly articulated vision, which strives to create in each child a feeling of self-worth, is tangible in all aspects of the school's work. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'Lofthouse Gate is an excellent school: my children have excelled since being there.'

All staff, pupils and parents understand what is expected of them. All are committed to maintaining and improving the very high standards that are achieved. Pupils make excellent progress throughout their time in school, reaching standards well above those expected nationally.

When children start in the Nursery Class (Foundation Stage 1), their skills and abilities are in line with those expected for their age. The majority of children make exceptional progress so that by the time they leave the Foundation Stage almost all achieve beyond the expected levels in the identified areas of learning. This excellent progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 1 so that, by the end of Year 2, pupils consistently achieve standards that are significantly higher than those achieved both locally and nationally. The reason pupils make such excellent progress is because of outstanding provision, high quality resources and consistently good and often outstanding teaching.

Teachers in Key Stage 2 rise to the challenge: they pick up the baton and ensure that rapid rates of progress are seamless. Pupils unfailingly reach the challenging targets set for them in each of their classes. Year-on-year pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attain results in English, mathematics and science well above those achieved locally and nationally. Higher achieving pupils consistently attain the very highest levels in English, mathematics and science. Over the past five years, the percentage of pupils achieving the highest level, Level 5, has been well above the national average. This is because all staff have an excellent understanding of what needs to be taught and pupils have an outstanding work ethic.

Work seen during the inspection and the school's own data indicates that this picture of high achievement will be even stronger in 2008.

Early identification of needs and the high quality delivery of intervention programmes ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make the same rates of outstanding progress as their peers.

The quality of teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Subject leaders, the leadership team and governors regularly monitor the work in classrooms with a focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Consequently, all in school fully understand what constitutes an excellent lesson and endeavour to ensure that every learning opportunity has the highest expectations of standards and behaviour. Pupils understand what they are setting out to learn and teachers guide them well towards reaching the next levels in their work through high quality oral and written feedback. A particular strength in teaching is the use by pupils and teachers of information and communication technology, an area for improvement in the last inspection. It is now used confidently by even the youngest pupils in school. Teachers are adept at devising interesting ways to capture pupils' interest. For example, a lesson on persuasive texts was brought alive by comparisons between radio and television advertisements using the interactive whiteboards. Well qualified teaching assistants, some with accreditation in Braille, provide

first class support for all pupils, especially for those visually impaired or identified with other additional needs.

The school has developed an exceptionally effective curriculum, which incorporates an emphasis on basic skills with exciting opportunities for pupils to research topics in great depth. Having identified a potential weakness in writing, the school set about providing opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in all subjects and not just in literacy lessons. As a result pupils are able to express complex ideas and develop reasoned, mature arguments in all areas of the curriculum. Creativity, visual arts and music are an integral part of the way in which pupils learn. High quality artwork, pottery and fabric work provide a colourful and stimulating backdrop to the learning environment. Consequently, pupils are eager to learn, enjoy their lessons and are able to demonstrate increasingly mature methods for tackling problems. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 6 devise their own scientific investigations, taking on the role of teacher when presenting their ideas to the rest of the group. A wide range of out-of-school sporting and arts based activities are attended by over half the pupils. The outstanding provision in the curriculum has been recognised in the acquisition of Artsmark (Gold) and Healthy Schools award.

Relationships between all adults and pupils are exemplary, with good manners and courtesy a feature of the daily life in school. Pupils are confident, articulate and well behaved at all times. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is consistently above the national average. The school council take their role as ambassadors and decision makers extremely seriously. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. A recent arts week allowed pupils to celebrate the culture of families recently arrived in their community through art, music and dance. Understanding of the wider cultural diversity of British society is expanding through links with other communities. High levels of academic skills, exemplary behaviour and ability to work as a team in many different situations equip pupils well for life beyond the school gates.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Pupils feel safe and know that they have someone to go to if there is a problem. All safeguarding procedures are well established, with leaders and governors regularly monitoring pupils' safety. The school has devised a simple, yet highly effective, system to monitor the academic achievements of all pupils. It provides teachers with an accurate view on the rates of progress of pupils in their class, ensuring consistently high standards. Equally, it ensures that all pupils have a good understanding of their own personal targets as to how to improve.

Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. The headteacher is the driving force behind a culture of high expectations and continual improvement. A strong leadership team monitors and evaluates accurately all aspects of the school's work. Action planning is thorough and based on critical self-evaluation with improved outcomes for pupils always the focus for any initiative. Since the last inspection, the role of subject leaders has been developed so that they now have a full understanding of achievement and standards in their areas. The highly effective pupil tracking systems ensure that no pupil is ever in danger of being left behind.

The governing body provides effective challenge and support to the work of the school. They are regular visitors to the school and are knowledgeable about the achievement and standards of pupils. Financial management is exemplary with identified expenditure always linked to thorough action planning and regular scrutiny of outcomes. A majority of parents responding to the questionnaire praised the work of the school. A few raised the desire for the school to seek their views on a more regular basis. School leaders have already devised a programme of consultation to be implemented in the near future.

The school provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. A strong team of teachers and nursery nurses work closely together, planning jointly for activities in the three classes. Regular assessments of children's progress mean that activities are always well matched to their abilities.

Very young children cooperate well, becoming increasingly independent in their choices of activities. Good quality role-play areas increase their confidence in writing and the ability to use and handle money. For example, in the baker's shop children could recognise and use coins correctly and begin to make marks depicting recipes and shopping lists. Outside provision allows children to put in to practice the skills they have learnt in the indoor areas: becoming confident explorers looking for bugs outside after studying plastic models in the classroom. Good liaison between home and school ensures that children settle quickly. Effective record keeping and assessments mean that no time is wasted, so that children's progress is uninterrupted as they move in to Key Stage 1. Preparations for the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum from September are fully in place with opportunities to extend learning through play already established in Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no major issues for the school to address as they are all correctly identified in the school development plan.

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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	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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 Lofthouse Gate Primary, Wakefield, WF3 3HU

Thank you for making me so welcome during my visit to your school this week. The reason I came was to inspect your school and here are some of the important things that I found.

- Your school provides an excellent standard of education. You told me that it is a happy, friendly place to learn and I agree with you.
- Your school is very well led and managed, that means the headteacher, school leaders and the governors all do an outstanding job in making sure that you reach such high standards and achieve in everything you set out to do.
- Very young children get off to a great start in the Foundation Stage.
- Your teachers know you very well and can tell, right from your first days in school, what you need to do next to improve.
- Your lessons are always interesting and well taught by your teachers.
- Teaching assistants and nursery nurses do a great job in helping you with your learning.

Of course you deserve a lot of credit for your superb manners, behaviour and your great attitudes towards learning. You all give your very best all of the time.

Lots of your parents think this is a great school. Mrs Smith and her team already have plans to make the school even better.

You have so much to be proud of at Lofthouse Gate School and you are a huge part of what makes it so successful, so keep up the good work!

Best wishes to all of you for the future.