

Loughton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110390
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	310281
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Rebecca Ferguson
Headteacher	Mr Kenneth Behrens
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2003
School address	Bradwell Road Loughton Milton Keynes MK5 8DN
Telephone number	01908 665971
Fax number	01908 235150

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large four-form entry junior school is popular and oversubscribed. Pupils come from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds, with around a third from different minority ethnic groups. The numbers speaking English as an additional language (EAL) is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, is in line with that found nationally. There are three children with statements of special educational need. The school was reorganised from a middle to a junior school just over two years ago with pupils coming from eleven other schools. It has achieved the Artsmark Gold, Activemark and the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Loughton provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Parents agree and are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school. One parent, representing the views of many, said, 'The care and support that we have enjoyed as a family from the Loughton School Community are giving my children the aspirations and attitudes that I am sure will stay with them throughout their lives'.

The school has been through a period of great change. Good leadership and management at all levels have enabled it to meet these changes well. The headteacher and senior management team are ensuring that every child is welcomed and included in the school's activities whatever their backgrounds or abilities. This is illustrated effectively by one parent who wrote, 'We came to the UK two years ago and my child didn't know the ABC....but he can now join in and discuss a complex subject in different fields because of the school's efforts.'

Achievement is good. The progress made by pupils presents a very complex picture due to the changing nature of the school's intake and the high mobility since the school was reorganised. Standards last year were average in English, mathematics and science. These pupils did not start at the school until Year 4 and around two out of five joined during Years 5 and 6, often from abroad, with little or no English. Tracking data shows these pupils achieve well from their generally lower starting points because the school is good at supporting them and meeting their needs. For this reason, in spite of this good progress, standards are broadly average at the age of eleven. Subject leaders are constantly seeking ways to improve pupils' performance by acting as consultants to the year teams. The leaders of English and mathematics monitor their subjects well and use the information they gather to make useful contributions to school improvement. Other subject leaders do not yet have sufficient opportunities to monitor as rigorously the quality of learning across the year teams to ensure greater consistency in pupils' progress.

Pupils' achievement is good because important areas of the school's provision such as the quality of teaching and the curriculum are both good. Pupils make good progress during lessons because teachers have high expectations of how much they can achieve, and individuals have work well matched to their needs. However, teaching is not yet consistently good across all classes, which results in uneven progress. Learning is most effective when teachers give pupils opportunities to learn independently, use their initiative and think things out for themselves. This does not yet occur in all lessons.

Care, guidance and support are good and the pastoral aspects are outstanding. Pupils are well cared for, feel secure and really enjoy their schooling. There are strong partnerships with the local community and with outside agencies to promote learners' well-being. The school is good at supporting the increasing numbers of pupils who are not fluent in English or find learning difficult. However, systems for tracking pupils' progress are complex, and are being simplified to make it easier for teachers to quickly identify any underachievement and deal with it. The school's good track record at adapting to change and their very clear view of what needs to be done next means that they have a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils of all abilities to learn independently and to use their initiative in order to sustain rapid progress.

- Ensure that subject leaders help improve pupils' progress by monitoring the quality of learning across the year teams with the same rigour as the leaders for English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, but achievement is good. The school has been through a period of considerable change and the picture of the progress made by different groups is very complex because of this. Those older pupils, who do not start until the beginning of Year 4 or even later during Year 5 and 6, make good progress during their time at the school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress and achieve well. This occurs because all of these groups receive very good quality help. The schools' monitoring data shows that younger pupils who started at the beginning of Year 3 are making good progress and attaining higher standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with some outstanding features. Pupils form good relationships with adults, and with each other, and have very positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, behaviour is extremely good and they attend very regularly. However, their ability to work independently and use their initiative are not as well developed. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy eating and staying safe and are able to discuss ideas about healthy lifestyles and diet with friends, teachers and parents. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously, including reviewing rules for using the playground at lunchtime, money raising for local and national charities and donating gifts to a local family refuge. Pupils quickly acquire skills in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). These, along with their positive attitudes, and their ability to work collaboratively prepares them well for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and is reflected in the good progress pupils make. Lessons are carefully planned using assessment information well to guide the next steps of pupils' learning. This ensures that tasks are well matched to individual needs and underpins pupils' good progress. Teachers are responding well to the changing nature of the school's intake. For example, they make certain that pupils with little English understand exactly what they have to do, which helps them to keep up. They use highly effective ways of marking pupils' work which clearly indicates how well pupils are doing and how they can improve. However, there are inconsistencies. Tasks do not always challenge pupils sufficiently to explore their own ideas further or think things out for themselves. This slows their rate of progress, particularly for those who work quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is of good quality with some outstanding features. Throughout the school, provision for the development of basic skills is good and ensures that pupils make good progress. A particularly good feature is the way in which it meets the needs of pupils of with learning difficulties, particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, and those whose first language is not English. Another good element is the extremely good opportunities pupils have to participate in and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities and after school clubs. Such experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, teach skills that contribute well to pupils' future economic well-being. Subjects are very often linked together thematically to make the tasks interesting and relevant. However, these plans do not always include enough opportunities for independent work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every child really does matter, and every effort is made to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all of the activities, including those who join the school late. Health and safety arrangements and child protection procedures are robust and reviewed regularly. Pupils have confidence in the staff and the school. They say they feel safe from bullying and know that adults will quickly deal with any worries or concerns. The school provides good academic guidance for its pupils and marking and feedback are very well used to help pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work. The school works very hard to collect considerable amounts of data to track the performance of groups and individuals. Senior staff have introduced ways of making this less complicated so that teachers can quickly identify underachievement and do something about it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have established a caring environment where all pupils are equally valued and achievement is celebrated. The senior leadership team are providing the reorganised school with energy and direction. The newly appointed year leaders are developing their roles well. They are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning within their teams in consultation with the subject leaders. Subject leaders monitor the quality of learning across the school to ensure greater consistency in pupils' progress. This most effective monitoring occurs in English and mathematics. School review is both thorough and searching, and results in actions that are addressing any underachievement and accelerating progress. The chair of governors has a very good knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the school and governors are very involved in managing the school.

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Loughton School, Milton Keynes, MK5 8DN

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We were impressed with your friendliness and your sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other. We think that you go to a good school and receive a good education. Here is a list of some of the many good things about it.

- Your school is friendly and welcoming. You behave extremely well and get on well with each other.
- You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons.
- You are very knowledgeable about healthy eating and lifestyles. I hope you will continue to eat your 'five portions of fruit a day' and take lots of exercise!
- There are lots of clubs and activities for you to attend at the end of the school day. These are proving to be very popular and you really enjoy them.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this we think that there are two things to do next.

- Your teachers need to give you even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently.
- We would also like your subject leaders to have more opportunities to check on how well you are learning. This will help them to make your work even better than it is.

You can all help by continuing to work hard to meet the targets set for you.

We are sure that you are ready for these challenges!

John Earish

Lead Inspector