

Linton Heights Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110672
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310384
Inspection dates	8–9 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Bowen
Headteacher	Mr Rod Halls
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Wheatsheaf Way Linton Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB21 4XB
Telephone number	01223892210
Fax number	01223890059

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school serving a mixed but generally advantaged area close to Cambridge. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average as is the number whose first language is other than English. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average although there are a higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Movement in and out of the school other than at the usual time is below average.

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 school that provides a satisfactory quality of education and parents rightly have confidence that this enables their children to become well-rounded and happy individuals. The pupils enjoy their time here and say they particularly like creative and practical activities including music. They have positive attitudes to school and behaviour is mostly good. There are good opportunities to work as part of the school and local community including on the school council. The pastoral support of pupils is good, which ensures that they work in a safe and caring environment where their individual talents are valued. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. However, despite these good aspects there are inconsistencies in other areas and inspection judgements are generally below the school's self-evaluation.

The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is above, and sometimes well above national averages. Data and observations show that pupils in Years 3 and 4 generally make satisfactory progress. The rate of progress improves for the older pupils and those in Year 6 make good and sometimes very good progress. Therefore at the age of 11 standards are above national averages in most subjects. Pupils throughout the school read well, but standards in other subjects are slightly lower. In mathematics and science fewer pupils reach the higher levels than in English. The school generally provides well for those with learning difficulties, enabling them to make good progress towards their targets. However, whilst overall most pupils achieve satisfactorily, some, including those of higher ability, could do even better.

Teaching and learning and the curriculum are satisfactory, as is the overall care and guidance provided. Teachers have recently extended the way in which they check and track the progress pupils make. But, the information available from tests and assessments is not always used to the fullest effect to ensure that lessons consistently challenge groups of different abilities. The school prioritises the teaching of literacy and numeracy and there is a good range of visits and enrichment activities that promote learning well. However, the hours allocated to the teaching week are below recommendations for this age and the time assigned to some subjects is less than usually seen. The resources for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) are also limited which does not always help pupils prepare well for their future economic well-being.

Parents believe the school runs efficiently and think highly of the headteacher in caring for their children. Governance is good; governors are very well led and well-informed. The deputy headteacher has led the introduction of a more effective system of checking and tracking the progress made. However, some subject leaders and class teachers do not make full enough use of information to ensure that planning and teaching is consistently challenging. The school has extended the opportunities for staff to monitor planning, teaching and pupils' work. But this is not extensive and at times monitoring is descriptive rather than evaluative and does not always identify exactly what could be improved further. Therefore, leadership and management are no more than satisfactory overall. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all activities provide a consistently high level of challenge and enable different groups of pupils to make the best progress possible.
- Make sure that the time allocated to teaching all subjects at least meets national recommendations.

- Check that the monitoring of planning, teaching and the pupils' work accurately identifies areas for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with skills that are above average. National tests at the age of 11 show that recently standards have often been above national averages. Throughout the school pupils with learning difficulties do well in relation to their targets because they are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. However, this is not the whole picture and data reveals that the value-added to pupils' learning in Key Stage 2 has often been little more than average overall and sometimes this is limited, except in Year 6 where this is good. Some higher attaining pupils have not always reached the level expected of them. Pupils read well and, with a good focus upon improving writing, standards are set to rise further. Standards in mathematics have been consistently lower than in English because, as in science, not as many attain the higher levels. Staff now assess pupils' skills on entry to Year 3 and regularly thereafter to build a thorough picture of what they know, understand and can do. Targets are set for groups and individual pupils. However, recent tracking has still identified that the progress made is not yet consistently good. Overall, while pupils make satisfactory progress, some higher attaining pupils and the good number identified as gifted and talented could still do even better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their learning. Behaviour around the school is generally good. Pupils form positive relationships with staff and say they would be able to confide in them if necessary. Attendance is above the national average although affected by holidays in term time. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well including in the fruit tuck shop, support for safe cycling and in promoting sporting activities. The school follows government guidelines to counter bullying and racist incidents. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community including through the school council and are pleased about the resulting upgrade of the toilets. Contributions to the village magazine, performing at a local care home and involvement in charities are examples of a wider contribution. At the moment, standards in ICT and mathematics are lower than those elsewhere and this is holding back the development of skills to contribute to future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is quite a wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning resulting in this being satisfactory overall. While much of the teaching observed in the inspection was good, and at times in Year 6 was outstanding, pupils' recent work shows this is not always consistent across the school. The strengths in teaching include the good relationships the staff have with pupils, which lead many of them to say they like their teachers and that they want to learn. While the school has worked hard to improve the quality of planning, this is still variable. At times no starter or introductory activity is planned and the same task is provided for all pupils, sometimes using textbooks that do little to motivate or challenge them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and places a suitable emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills. In addition to the day-to-day curriculum, the school also provides a good range of visits and theme weeks, adding interest and enjoyment and which are cross-curricular in nature. French has also been introduced. With a long-term shortage of computers, the effective use of ICT across the curriculum is only now being addressed. While some teachers use interactive whiteboards well to enrich the curriculum, others lack confidence in using them effectively. The school is currently developing its provision for gifted and talented pupils. The time allocated to teaching is below the minimum number of hours recommended as necessary to deliver the curriculum. This constrains the school from giving sufficient time to some subjects, for example to science.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

While the care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall; pastoral care is good and the school is a caring community. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place, including training for child protection. The necessary checks are made on all who work in school. Risk assessments are carried out, for example, prior to visits, although those within school are not as comprehensive. Potentially vulnerable pupils are referred for help from family support workers in the community. The effective special educational needs coordinator ensures that teachers and teaching assistants work together well to provide support outlined in individual education plans. Such individual plans are now also in place for gifted and talented pupils. Effective tracking of individual progress is being developed. This includes setting individual goals for achievement and progress. However, the implementation of this strategy is inconsistent, in part because of the varying effectiveness of subject coordinators. Where this is used well, for example in the upper part of the school, pupils make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parental responses to the inspection questionnaire indicate they are appreciative of the commitment and warmth shown by the headteacher, although several have a wide range of concerns. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy who is having a strong influence on school development. As assessment coordinator she has worked hard to improve the management of data and to encourage colleagues to use the information available to set consistently challenging targets. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the use of tracking information to inform planning. While the school has extended the opportunities for subject leaders and those in key roles to monitor planning, teaching and the quality of pupils work, this has not always been done rigorously enough to identify and address issues of under-performance. Governors are very well led and have developed a good programme of focussed visits to ensure they know at first hand what happens in 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?	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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

10 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linton Heights Junior School, Cambridge, CB21 4XB

Thank you very much for looking after us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you in lessons, at lunchtime and when we spoke to the school council.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- The staff care for you and look after you well.
- Most of you like coming to school, enjoy your time here and try hard with your work.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are supported well so that you grow in confidence and make progress.
- Teaching in Year 6 is good which ensures standards are above average when you leave the school.
- All your classes have a 'governor friend', which helps to ensure the school runs smoothly.

These are things the school could do to improve.

- Teachers need to use all the information from checking your work to ensure the next activities contain just the right level of challenge for you all.
- Staff should ensure that the hours you spend in lessons and on different subjects match what is expected for your age.
- When staff check planning, your work in lessons and in your books, they need to make sure they identify what else needs to be improved.

We would like to wish you every success in the future and please remember to take lots of exercise and eat healthily!

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector