

Lower Peover CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111337
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310569
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Louise Lawton
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Dean
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	The Cobbles Lower Peover Knutsford Cheshire WA16 9PZ
Telephone number	01565 722529
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the school's strategies to support improved achievement in writing and mathematics, and the impact of the school's work to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, parents' questionnaires and observation of the school at work. Interviews were conducted with senior members of staff, the chair of governors and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a small village school. The social and economic backgrounds of the pupils are generally favourable. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased markedly in the last year and is now average. A few pupils have a statement of special educational need, including some for autism. The school holds several awards, including the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark (Gold) and the Artsmark (Gold).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well academically. Their personal development and well-being is outstanding. Parents are very satisfied with the quality of education their children receive. In particular, they value the caring and approachable staff, the opportunities their children have to develop their sporting and musical talents, and the work of the headteacher.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally above average and this was once again the case in 2007, helped by improved standards in reading. Few pupils, however, reach the higher levels expected nationally for their age in writing and mathematics. Standards in the present Year 2 are similar to previous years. By the end of Year 6 achievement, overall, is good. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average and have been like this for several years. This masks some variation between the subjects. In 2007 standards were well above average in science and in reading. They improved to above average in mathematics, but declined to average in English, largely due to some underachievement in writing. The school has put in place a number of initiatives to redress this imbalance. These have had a satisfactory impact in quickening the pace of progress in writing and in raising standards in English in the current Year 6 to above average. However, as in Year 2, comparatively fewer pupils achieve the higher level in mathematics, and to a lesser extent, in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Their needs are quickly identified, support for them is well organised and their progress is carefully checked. Teaching assistants who support pupils with a statement of special educational need, often individually, are very effective in directing the work of these pupils.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Particular strengths are pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. The school's successful commitment to expanding pupils' multicultural awareness through participation in the Afritwin project is reflected well in pupils' art work on a range of African, Indian and Aboriginal themes. Pupils make full use of opportunities for physical exercise through the extra-curricular programme and at break-times. They behave well in class and outside at play. Older pupils are considerate of the needs of the younger ones. As a result, all pupils enjoy these times to the full. All these highly positive features are reflected in the school's recent awards. Pupils are mature and perceptive and perform their duties effectively. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their exceptional attendance and good attitudes to their learning and to the wide range of musical and sporting activities on offer. The standards pupils reach in literacy and numeracy set them up well for their secondary education.

The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are regularly monitored and updated. Arrangements for safeguarding children meet current government guidelines. Pupils' relationships with the staff and with each other are strong. Good symbols of this are the engagement of adults and pupils at playtimes, and the effective use of the buddy bench. The instantly recognisable, red-capped school councillors who offer on-the-spot support if needed, staff this bench well. The school has effective liaison with outside agencies to support the growing number of pupils with identified needs.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Relationships are very good. Teachers capitalise effectively on pupils' positive attitudes, self-reliance and willingness to collaborate with each other in group tasks. Features of the stronger teaching enable pupils to learn at a brisk pace. These include clear planning and tasks which are adapted very well to meet the

needs of all pupils. Questioning is probing and learning is frequently reviewed in relation to pupils' targets to enable pupils to judge how well they are progressing and to decide what they need to do next. Where teaching is less strong these features are less in evidence and this slows the pace of pupils' learning. This lack of consistency, in some cases, is a shortcoming in an otherwise positive picture of teaching and learning.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well and it makes a good contribution to their learning. Recent initiatives to widen the scope of extra-curricular activities, for example in developing the range of musical activities and cultural opportunities, have been well received by pupils. The curriculum is monitored closely and there are some useful opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to reinforce their basic skills. This year the school has put in place a programme of extension activities to support, for example, talented pupils in art and gifted pupils in mathematics. Pupils enjoy these activities but they have not yet had a marked impact on standards at the higher levels of ability. By contrast, booster sessions to provide extra support for selected pupils in mathematics to help them achieve the nationally expected levels have been successful.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear direction and energetic and determined leadership. She has a sharp awareness of the strengths of the school and the areas of comparative weakness to point the way to further improvement. This is reflected in the school's highly accurate self-evaluation. However, the school development plan does not contain measurable criteria for assessing the impact of school initiatives and this makes it hard for leaders to evaluate precisely its efforts in raising standards.

The headteacher deploys the staff astutely within the constraints of operating two mixed-age classes in a small school. The school has built successfully on its reputation in the local community by providing a range of extra services popular with parents. This has been key to the recent steady increase in the school roll. Governors support the work of the school well. The school has developed well since its previous inspection, offers good value for money and is well set for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good education for the youngest children. On entry to Reception children's skills are, overall, slightly above national expectations. Boys and girls make equally good progress in all aspects of their learning from their individual starting points. By the time they leave Reception, children's standards are above the expected levels. The curriculum is clearly organised and the indoor resources are used to very good effect. All areas of learning are given due attention and children's work is closely directed. Children's well developed oral skills and excellent behaviour enable them to interact and support each other in their learning very well. Children enjoy their learning very much and quickly become independent. They persevere with tasks and several succeed in writing short legible story paragraphs. Good teaching reinforces the strong relationships and precise questioning helps children develop their ideas well. A significant strength is the well focused deployment of additional adults to support children's learning. This ensures that children are constantly engaged in their learning while those with a statement of special educational need receive effective individual support. The new Foundation Stage coordinator has a good awareness of the strengths and areas for further development and is implementing some well judged improvements to assessment practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement at the higher levels in mathematics and writing.
- Ensure a consistently high standard of teaching to enable all pupils to learn at a brisk pace.
- Set measurable success criteria to enable leaders to evaluate accurately the impact of the actions they take to raise academic standards.

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

Achievement and standards

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to thank you for your help when I inspected your school recently and to tell you about my inspection findings. I valued the opportunities I had to meet and talk to you. You told me how much you enjoy lots of things at school, including lessons and other activities such as sport and music. You also appreciate the opportunities the school provides for you to get to know each other better and to make friends. I was impressed by the high regard you have for all the staff. They look after you very well. These very good relationships are an important reason why you feel safe and happy in school and why your attendance is so good. I talked to some of your parents and what they said backed up your views completely. I judge your personal development to be outstanding.

Your school provides you with a good education. The youngest children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. The older pupils make good progress overall. By the time they leave school they have achieved standards which are above average and this prepares them well for secondary school. You achieve very well in science and in reading, but some of you could do better at the higher levels in writing and, especially, in mathematics. I have asked the headteacher to make sure this happens.

You enjoy lessons and work well both independently and in groups to develop your skills. You are taught well, but some of you make faster progress than others. I have asked the headteacher to make sure you all learn at a brisk pace.

Finally, I have asked the headteacher to set up a sharper way of checking that the actions the staff take to raise your standards work to best effect.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard, especially in mathematics and in writing tasks, and by keeping up your really good attendance levels.

Best wishes for the future.