

Ladycross Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112614
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	310947
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mavis Jowett
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Hooley and Mr N Hunt
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Victoria Road Sandiacre Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG10 5JD
Telephone number	0115 9397379
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Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- What is the school doing to raise standards in reading, especially of boys, and of pupils with learning difficulties?
- How effective is the use of assessment data, target setting and guidance provided for pupils?
- What are the benefits and impact of the current leadership arrangements?

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of the governors, and from the parents' questionnaires. The main documents used by the school in monitoring and strategic planning were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as provided in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is of broadly average size and serves the Sandiacre area to the west of Nottingham. An average proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion who are from minority ethnic groups is below average; very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. Children's attainment on entry varies but is often well below that expected. The school has been awarded a Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark and a Healthy Schools Award.

The school is led by two co-headteachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides pupils with an excellent start to their formal education. Outstanding teaching is reflected in excellent achievement and above average standards by the end of Year 2. The school is outstandingly well led and managed by two co-headteachers. They very effectively and efficiently share the role, maintain clear overall leadership and ensure the promotion of a high quality education. Although the school's self-evaluation is occasionally overly modest, it is very aware of its strengths and areas requiring further improvement and there is no complacency. This accurate self-knowledge together with the improvements made since the last inspection and the imaginative leadership systems are an important part of the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. The school's success is reflected in many of the parents' views. One wrote, 'I have always found everyone who works at the school puts children's development and welfare first.'

Many children start in the Nursery with poorly developed language, communication, personal and social skills. The excellent provision in the Nursery class results in very fast progress. This is maintained through the Reception year, so that by the end of the Foundation Stage most children have reached the levels expected of them. The outstanding progress continues through Years 1 and 2 due to the high quality teaching. The 2007 national assessments showed that for the third year running standards were well above average in reading and mathematics, and exceptionally high in writing. This illustrates the excellent achievement made by many pupils. Boys do especially well and better than boys in similar schools. Recent work to raise boys' standards in reading has included reviewing resources, the teaching methods used to motivate boys and different ways of encouraging them to read with enjoyment. The latest assessments made in Year 2 reflect an improvement in reading standards overall, and the standards in all three subjects remain above average.

The provision for those pupils who find learning difficult is excellent, and this results in their outstanding progress. Although a number of pupils with significant special needs did not reach the average for such pupils last year, they still made very good progress and developed into effective learners. The support provided for these pupils is very effective and the teaching assistants offer outstanding help to ensure they can take a full part in all activities.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have an exceptional understanding and awareness of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They make an excellent contribution to their own and the wider community. The school council is very active and articulate, and pupils are very keen to share the work they do to raise money for a child in Africa, for example. They have a well-developed awareness of nature, partly helped by the very popular webcam in the school's bird box. The grounds have not been fully utilised. The school now intends to improve the use of the outdoors for learning in a wide range of ways. The school works successfully to encourage parents to appreciate the need for full attendance. This is made easier because the pupils clearly enjoy school very much. They say there are adults they can trust to help them if they are worried about anything.

Pupils' behaviour in school is excellent and this supports their learning. It is partly the result of the outstanding relationships built up between teachers and pupils. The excellent teaching is very challenging and teachers have very high expectations. This is especially evident in pupils' writing and results in very good quality, interesting written work. Teachers are fully aware of the different ways pupils learn. They make excellent use, for example, of giving pupils

opportunities to talk to a partner to arrive at an answer or to solve a problem. This helps consolidate and extend their learning, and builds self-esteem and confidence. The staff have created an excellent, colourful but calm learning environment in classrooms and around the school. Displays celebrate pupils' work and support their learning very effectively.

The curriculum has been developed recently to ensure the most recent guidance for teaching letter sounds, literacy and numeracy is fully implemented. A lot of work has gone into ensuring the effective use of new technology in many subjects. Excellent links are made between subjects to help make learning more meaningful and to help pupils use the skills they learn in different situations. The curriculum is enriched very effectively through a wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are outstandingly well cared for, and all requirements regarding their safety are followed well. In addition, the school leadership has extensively improved the systems for tracking pupils' academic progress, setting challenging targets and the range of methods for helping pupils learn from their errors through very effective marking. This work is clearly having a positive impact on learning.

The leadership of the two co-headteachers is a major strength and has been a vital factor in the improvement made since the last inspection. They have very high expectations of pupils and staff and this is reflected in the provision. The imaginative leadership of the curriculum through two staff teams ensures that all have ownership of the school's successes and an important part to play in the school's continuing improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school and willing to allow innovation that can be clearly justified by the senior leadership. However, governors do not yet monitor the outcomes of some of those innovations sufficiently and at first hand.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The curriculum throughout the Foundation Stage has been developed to ensure the full implementation of recent changes to national requirements for the early years. In addition, the provision in the Nursery has been greatly improved through the development of the excellent outdoor resources and the use of these for imaginative play and learning experiences. The Foundation Stage is excellently led by one of the co-headteachers and this outstanding provision is evident in the high levels achieved, especially by children who often start at the school with low language, communication and social skills. The Nursery and Reception classes are generously staffed with well-qualified adults and a range of volunteer or student helpers. This ensures low child to adult ratios and especially supports the rapid improvement evident in children's social and communication skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the resourcing and use of the outdoors for all pupils' learning.
- Develop more effective systems to help the governing body monitor the work of 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?	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	2
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	2
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	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

20 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ladycross Infant School, Nottingham, NG10 5JD

I am writing to thank you for your help when I visited your school recently. I also want to tell you what I found out about how well your school is performing.

The teachers are working very hard to help you learn new things. They are helped by you because you are so well behaved and so good at listening in lessons. Because of this you learn many new things, make very good progress and you reach high standards by the time you leave the school.

The headteachers, together with the other adults, provide some very interesting activities for you to do. They help you get better at reading, writing and number work. I enjoyed meeting some of you and talking to those of you in the school council and those with whom I had lunch. You told me that you are very happy at school. You know what you need to do to improve your work because of the targets the teachers give you and the helpful way they mark your work.

All these good things happen because yours is an outstanding school with excellent teaching and excellent leadership by your two headteachers.

Even the best schools can improve and I know your teachers and others want to help you learn even more in the future. I have asked them to make better use of the school's outdoor spaces to help you learn through even more interesting activities. I have also asked the governing body to check more closely on how well the school is doing.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection. Enjoy your time at Ladycross and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector