

Leigh Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114774
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LA
Inspection number	311707
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Haworth
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Lucas
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	North Street Leigh-on-Sea Essex SS9 1QE
Telephone number	01702476224
Fax number	01702471029

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the Foundation Stage and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, leadership and management, gathering evidence from visits to lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents. 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 given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Leigh Infant School is slightly larger than most primary schools, and is over-subscribed. Fewer pupils are eligible for free school meals than average, and there are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language than average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need are average. The proportion of boys is higher than girls, and higher than in schools nationally.

The school has the Sports Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'We couldn't ask for a better school'. Parents know that Leigh Infant School is an outstanding school. The words of another parent echo the view of many others, 'This is an excellent school, very well managed, fantastic staff, a credit to the community'. These words sum up the school!

When they join, pupils' attainment is just below national expectations overall, although this varies, with key differences between the attainment of boys and girls. They make a flying start in Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with standards slightly above national expectations. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been above average in all subjects for the last five years. This is a notable achievement for the school. Consistently strong teaching means that all pupils make outstanding progress to meet challenging targets. In 2007, although standards in all subjects were higher than average, there was a difference in the results of boys and girls. More girls reached the higher Level 3 in reading and writing than boys, and more boys reached the higher Level 3 in mathematics than girls. This was because of particular issues relating to the group of pupils and their ability on entry. However, the school is not complacent, and action has been taken to make writing more interesting to boys and to help girls to use mathematics creatively.

In fact, complacency does not exist in Leigh Infant School. All staff and governors are passionate about helping pupils to do their very best, in all aspects of their development and in preparation for their futures. Consistency does exist however. The headteacher keeps a very close check on teaching to maintain quality and consistency of practice. Other key leaders monitor provision in their subjects. By planning together in year groups teachers make sure that all pupils have access to the same learning opportunities, and indeed, that all classrooms have matched, stimulating learning environments. Teaching enables pupils to reach high standards in all areas; sports, artwork and singing, for example, are also of a very high standard. Teachers know their pupils very well and plan just the right tasks at the right time for the right pupils. They are well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants, every moment of whose time is used effectively to help pupils learn. Assessment is rigorous and highly effective. Outcomes are analysed, initially by the class teacher, then discussed by year group staff, and finally with the headteacher. Any sign of underachievement is picked up promptly and dealt with through extra support to reinforce learning and accelerate progress. There is true equality of opportunity. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and pupils know how to improve their work through comments that teachers make in lessons or written marking. An interesting range of homework reinforces learning, although the pupils do not always realise this is 'homework'! Teaching is very clearly focused on improving writing through developing speaking and listening skills, and on improving mathematical skills through problem solving. However, although teachers plan specific opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills they do not take all opportunities for pupils to engage in 'shared talk' during whole class sessions.

The outstanding teaching is underpinned by an equally outstanding, rich and varied curriculum, designed to match the full range of pupils' abilities and to support pupils' personal development and well-being. Activities are planned across the curriculum to promote interest and develop key skills such as speaking and listening, writing and information and communication technology. For example, Year 1 pupils in their vet's role-play area, when preparing to operate on the toy cat, developed teamwork skills in addition to language skills which would support and give purpose to their writing. Wherever possible, activities appeal to the learning styles that pupils like, for example many, boys particularly, prefer practical activities. An equally strong focus is

given to the development of the social and emotional aspects of learning. Opportunities for sport are very good, and the curriculum is enhanced well by French, theme days, visits, visitors and some after-school clubs.

Care and guidance are outstanding. Pupils are very well looked after, feel safe, and know there are adults to talk to if they have a problem. Safeguarding, child protection, and health and safety procedures are rigorous and all meet government requirements. Academic support is exemplary. Every child's needs are assessed from the minute they enter school. Those who need support, be it for a learning difficulty or disability, because they are particularly able, because of emotional problems, or because they haven't made as much progress as expected, are given carefully selected and targeted support, monitored by the learning support coordinator. Transfer arrangements both pre-school and with the Junior school are first-rate.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are exceptional. Pupils are polite and very welcoming to visitors and behave very well. They know how to be healthy, stay safe, and clearly enjoy school. Despite this, and despite the schools' best efforts, attendance remains only satisfactory. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to develop responsibility, through the active school council, by being 'special helpers' at lunch time and through a range of fund raising activities.

The headteacher, described by more than one parent as 'excellent' is tenacious in making sure that pupils actually do make expected progress. She has a thorough knowledge of every pupil and their needs. She has her 'finger on the pulse' at all times. Her vision, shared by the rest of the staff team, has created this outstanding provision. The strength of this 'fantastic staff' team is the very positive, supportive yet challenging relationship between them all, and their relationship with parents. Every effort is used to communicate with parents, the 'icing on the cake' being the bright interactive web-site. The thorough self-evaluation process involves all stakeholders, and the views of parents, staff, pupils and governors are carefully considered. The resulting school development plan is sharply focused on key areas for improvement. Governance is also outstanding, governors know the school very well, they are well trained, and have their own action plan. They rigorously hold the school to account. Resources are very well used; the school gives outstanding value for money and has excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Although their children have only been in Foundation Stage for a relatively short time, parents' comments are overwhelmingly positive. Provision is outstanding and children make very good progress. Children are assessed on their very first morning in school. Outcomes are discussed with parents during home visits made that same afternoon, so that parents and school staff have a shared understanding of needs right from the start. These needs are met by carefully planned, interesting and exciting activities. The learning environment is richly resourced and every nook and cranny of both the inside and the outside areas have been used imaginatively to promote learning, from the secret garden to the tyres used for hide and seek. With outstanding leadership from the deputy headteacher, as Foundation Stage coordinator, teachers and early years' support staff work as a highly effective team. The curriculum is responsive to children's needs and has the right level of challenge. All pupils are encouraged to be responsible and independent learners. Teaching is outstanding and relationships between adults and pupils are positive and productive at all times.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise the use of shared talk in lessons in order to further develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and to promote pupils' own contributions to learning.

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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	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	3
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

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leigh Infant School, North Street, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1QE

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you all. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for talking to me. I know that you really enjoy being at your school and enjoy your work. I think your school is outstanding, and I know that your parents agree with me! Lots of them say it is an 'excellent' school and say they could not 'ask for more'! I was very impressed by the way you all work together and the respect you all show each other.

The adults at your school are a 'fantastic' team. They look after you extremely well, and importantly, want you to do as well as you can in your learning in every way possible. Because they know you so well, they are able to plan work for you that is at just the right level, which means that you really can do your very best. The only thing I think they need to do is to make sure that you have the chance to discuss questions when you are all working together so that you can all think about the answers.

I hope you all enjoy your Centenary celebrations and have a great Christmas.

With best wishes

Heather Weston HMI