

Letchmore Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117151
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312517
Inspection date	31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann 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	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Williams
Headteacher	Mrs Roma Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2003
School address	Letchmore Road Stevenage SG1 3PS
Telephone number	01438234400
Fax number	01438 234401

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: provision for children in the Foundation Stage and progress made in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 1, gathering evidence from classroom visits, discussions with staff and pupils and examination of school documents, especially assessment data. 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

Letchmore Infant and Nursery School is average in size for its type. Pupils mainly come from the surrounding area and about a fifth are from minority ethnic groups. Children start in the nursery with levels of attainment that are equivalent to that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who qualify for a free school meal is below average. The number with a specific learning difficulty and/or disability is also below the national average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing but it is still below that seen nationally. Healthy School Award status was granted in 2007.

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 where all pupils make significant progress in both their academic and personal development. This view is shared by the overwhelming majority of parents. Comments such as; 'My child has flourished both academically and socially since being at the school.' and 'A wonderful school, excellent results and well-behaved children. Brilliant!' are just some of the many positive views expressed by parents at the time of inspection.

Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher coupled with a dedicated team of teachers and support staff are just two of the many reasons for the school's continued success. Planning for whole school improvement is very thorough. It is backed by comprehensive monitoring and very accurate self-evaluation to ensure that the school is never complacent but always striving to improve. The governing body provides outstanding levels of support. Partnerships with other schools and outside agencies are very well established. Consequently, the high standards noted at the previous inspection have now been built on and pupils attain very high standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments indicate that standards in science are equally as high. Expectations are very high. Challenging work is very carefully matched to the individual needs of all pupils to ensure these very high standards are attained in both writing and mathematics.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. This is because teachers ensure that learning experiences are exciting and relevant to the pupils' individual needs. Many pupils say that they love writing and examples such as, 'Once upon a time there was a man. He wanted to go to Jupiter. He was a brave man but he was scared of the journey.' fully exemplify the standards reached by boys in Year 2 as part of their 'Space Theatre' work. In such a positive and vibrant climate for learning, very positive relationships exist between staff and pupils, and pupils themselves. Pupils state that they love coming to school because they are always learning new things. Attendance is above average as a result. Pupils are very keen to talk to visitors about all of the exciting things they learn and do at school. All of the pupils work very hard in lessons to achieve what the teachers ask of them and respond very well to the targets set for them in literacy and numeracy. They are developing a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their community through raising money for national charities and participation in the School Council. All are fully prepared for their next stage of learning.

The quality of education is outstanding and exceptional teaching is commonplace. The classrooms are bright and exciting learning environments. Teachers demonstrate excellent use of questions and resources to support key teaching points and stimulate the imagination of all pupils. Pupils are managed very well and lessons move along at a brisk pace. Curriculum planning is very comprehensive and both indoor and outdoor learning environments are used very well to excite and motivate pupils. Learning intentions are made very clear to pupils at the start of lessons to provide a very effective structure for the assessment of their individual progress. Staff use this information very effectively to fully match learning activities to the needs of all pupils and set targets for them to achieve.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to pupils is yet another outstanding feature. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are very robust and applied rigorously. A very effective team of support staff ensures that provision for those pupils needing extra support is excellent. Parents speak very highly about the quality of this provision. Assessment procedures

are very comprehensive and used very well to monitor the achievements of all pupils in many subject areas. Computer based systems are used very well to interpret this data and set challenging targets for teachers, improve standards and ensure that the progress of all pupils is monitored in detail. Although, many pupils are aware of the targets set for them, sometimes teachers do not always make explicit reference to them in lessons to raise standards even further.

All of the weaknesses noted at the time of the previous inspection related to teaching in the reception classes and have been fully rectified. Furthermore, the school continues to increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. Its capacity for further improvement is very good and taking all factors into account, the school provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for all children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Leadership and management are excellent and very good teamwork ensures that provision is as good in all classes. Parental comments such as, 'I have been particularly impressed by the way in which progression of nursery children to Reception is managed.' confirms this level of consistency. Very detailed planning and effective curriculum links ensure that all areas of learning are covered in considerable depth. Assessment procedures are very thorough and cover all areas of learning. Teaching is outstanding and a very extensive range of learning activities is provided for all children to experience. This very high quality provision ensures that all children make good progress across the Foundation Stage for many to attain above nationally expected levels by the time they start in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of pupil targets further to raise standards in literacy and numeracy even higher.

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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	1
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	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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Letchmore Infant and Nursery School, Stevenage, SG1 3PS

I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome during my visit. It is very clear to me that you all enjoy being at school and find learning fun. I saw excellent behaviour wherever I went and I noticed that all of you try your very best to complete your work. Many of you told me that the school is a good place to learn in and I totally agree with you, because it is in fact, outstanding!

Mrs Marshall is an outstanding headteacher who leads the school really well. She has built up an excellent team of teachers and support staff around her. They all work very hard together to ensure that you can achieve the highest standards possible while you are school. They plan many opportunities for you to work together with your friends, both inside and outside the classrooms. The displays of your work, beautiful paintings on the walls and attractive lights make sure that the school is a wonderful place to work and play in. The staff provide outstanding levels of care and support for you all, always taking the time and trouble to listen to your concerns. They set targets for you to achieve which many of you know by heart. However, they are going to try and always use them as much as possible so that you make even better progress. The governors provide plenty of support for the school and carefully plan what to do next to make it even better.

Once again, thank you very much for making me feel so welcome in your school and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector