

Latchford CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132247
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	315989
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Brenda Hynes
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Wightman
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Old Road Warrington Cheshire WA4 1AP
Telephone number	01925 634967
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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: achievement and standards; personal development and well-being; teaching and learning; curriculum; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the analysis of pupils' work and of assessment data and other documents. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, parents, the chair of governors and key staff. 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

This average-sized school serves an urban area, characterised by a mixture of housing association properties and first time buyer private houses. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is around the average. Although the percentage of pupils who use English as an additional language is slightly lower than average, the proportion has doubled over the last year. There are several looked after children. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than into the Nursery or out of Year 6 is quite a bit higher than normal. The school has a national Healthy School's Award.

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. Within the overall good quality of leadership and management, the clear vision and very high expectations of the outstanding headteacher have ensured that there have been good improvements in most aspects since the last inspection. In that time, the introduction of rigorous checks on pupils' progress has enabled the staff to much more clearly identify gaps in pupils' learning and to subsequently provide telling interventions and extra support for those at risk of falling behind. As a result, standards have risen, particularly in Key Stage 2 and pupils achieve well. In this key stage, pupils' progress has been outstanding over the last four years, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Overall standards in Year 6 are now above average and, in science, very high. An example of effective management has been in the way in which Year 6 girls' performance has improved in science. Previously boys performed better than girls. The school acted to alter this by teaching more practical science and invited female scientists into the school to inspire the girls. As a result, in the 2007 national tests in science all girls achieved highly. Despite introducing strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing, especially that of boys, this area of pupils' achievement has improved least since the last inspection. Pupils' spelling and punctuation are the weakest aspects of their writing. Attainment in writing still lags behind their fluent reading.

Where the school's work is excellent is in promoting pupils' outstanding personal development through ensuring a superb level of care and support for them all, but particularly for those who are most vulnerable. A typical comment from parents is, 'I have no doubt that our daughter is safe and well cared for. The teachers have been fantastic with her and know her very well, which we find impressive in a class of 30.'

Through their good behaviour, their open, friendly manner and very positive attitudes to their work, pupils are effective learners and concerned young citizens. Because they are given many opportunities to care for each other, to take responsibility and to widen their horizons through a rich curriculum, pupils understand how to contribute well to their own and the local community.

A well planned and taught programme to promote pupils' health and well-being results in them eating healthily and enjoying the benefits of plenty of exercise. The employment of a specialist dance and keep fit instructor enhances this aspect of pupils' learning and is an example of the good value for money the school gains from its deployment of staff. In the same way, the use of a specialist teacher has strikingly improved pupils' achievements in music, especially in appreciating and performing a whole range of different types of music. Their access to the instruments and music of various ethnic groups promotes their cultural awareness very well. Teaching is of good overall quality which promotes pupils' good progress. There is some outstanding teaching in Year 2 and in Year 6. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils used their knowledge of the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to predict how the characters would respond to certain events. They then responded extremely well to the teacher's excellent illustration of 'archaic' language to produce a play-script that reflected the style of Shakespeare. In some classes, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not make it crystal clear how they can improve their work.

The school has established very close and positive links with a range of outside agencies and providers. These have greatly enhanced the provision for and the achievements of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who use English as an additional language and those who have emotional problems. Well qualified and efficiently deployed support staff also

make a valuable contribution to these pupils' personal and academic development. Parents are close partners and are particularly effective in supporting their children's reading. They also appreciate the opportunities to learn Spanish alongside their children at an after-school club.

The school has experienced a two year period of turbulence in its leadership team. During this time the headteacher almost single-handedly led and managed the school with effective support from class teachers and capable and supportive governors. A new team is now in place but its members are still developing their skills, especially the middle managers' ability to set measurable priorities for improvement. The many improvements achieved in pupils' standards and achievements, in the quality of teaching and assessment, and in the school's environment are a testament to the unwavering determination of the headteacher to implement change. This improvement, together with the potential evident in the leadership team, means the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Different groups of children enter the Nursery with skills that differ from year to year, but are always below or well below those expected for their age. In the Nursery and Reception they are taught and supported well. Together with rigorous assessment, this results in children's needs being met well, enabling them to make good progress overall. However, many still enter Year 1 not reaching the goals set for them nationally in their use of language, literacy skills and in their mathematical development. These are always the weakest areas of their skills on entry to the Nursery. They do best in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. These aspects are very strong because adults care so well for the children, ensuring that they settle quickly into routines and as a result of the stimulating and well equipped outside classroom. Parents speak very highly of the provision in the Foundation Stage and rightly believe that their children have a very good start to their schooling. The comment, 'We feel our daughter has settled very well into Nursery due to the care and attention she receives from her teachers. Her progress in many areas is unbelievable in such a short time,' sums up the feelings of many parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, especially those of boys, and with a particular emphasis on improving pupils' spelling and punctuation.
- Ensure that all teachers mark pupils' work in such a way that makes it very clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.

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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?	1
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	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?	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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I would like to thank you for the polite and friendly way in which you welcomed me when I visited your school recently. You go to a good school, do well in your lessons and make excellent progress in Years 3 to 6. You were keen to tell me how much you enjoy lessons in which you act things out or investigate problems in mathematics and science. These are some of the ways you are taught which help you to learn really well.

You obviously appreciate the visits you make and the visitors who come into school to help you with your work. Your music and dance teachers certainly help your different skills in these subjects. The many after-school clubs you attend also help you to become fitter and to develop new interests.

Your headteacher is running the school really well and knows what to do to make the school improve even more. I have asked her and the governors to do two things to help make the school even better.

- To make sure that your writing improves, especially your spelling and punctuation. This is most important for the boys.
- To encourage all your teachers to tell you exactly what you need to do to improve when they mark your work.

You can also help to improve the school by always trying your very best and working really hard.