

Leas Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122441
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	317983
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Briggs
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Atkins
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2006
School address	Ley Lane Mansfield Woodhouse Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG19 8LD
Telephone number	01623 477629
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Leas Park is a larger than average junior school in Mansfield. Pupils are almost entirely from White British backgrounds. The number claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties including those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Attainment on entry to Year 3 is above average.

When the school was inspected in October 2006, it was judged to require special measures. This inspection was the third monitoring visit to take place as part of those special measures arrangements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The achievement of all pupils is satisfactory. After several years when the achievement of some groups of pupils has been inadequate, the progress that is now being made by all groups is at least satisfactory. In some classes and for some groups of pupils progress is good. This is because the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Teaching across the school is satisfactory and is often good. Teaching is better planned than at the last inspection and meets the needs of different groups and abilities of pupils well. Besides the teaching itself, pupils know what they are aiming at in each lesson and there are rigorous systems in place to check on the progress that pupils are making. Good support is provided for pupils that are in danger of falling behind. Further work should be done to improve teaching in order to increase the rate of progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A new, thematically based curriculum has been introduced in September 2007, designed to provide a greater degree of enjoyment for pupils. This will need careful review and evaluation. A wide range of other experiences is provided for the pupils, which adds significantly to their enjoyment. The personal development of pupils was satisfactory at the last inspection and is good now. They feel safe, and enjoy school enormously. This is reflected in their attendance, which is consistently good, and in their behaviour, which is excellent. They feel that their voice is heard and most take advantage of various opportunities to contribute to the school community. They respond to the school's commitment to encouraging healthy lifestyles. The skills and attitudes required in order that they will thrive in their later lives are soundly developed.

The progress the school has made stem from the hard work, determination and leadership of the headteacher. There is a clear understanding about the need to improve achievement and an acceptance of the ways by which this needs to be done. Other leaders and managers are playing an increasing part in driving forward improvements at the school, although their capacity to evaluate progress and drive change needs further development. There is a commitment to improvement, and a very good sense of collective purpose. Links between governors and the school are developing and governors are holding the school to account more effectively. The school is providing satisfactory value for money and has the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the capacity of leaders and managers to evaluate the work of the school and lead improvement.
- Ensure that the new curriculum is effectively reviewed and evaluated particularly with regard to links between subjects.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an OFSTED inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory. Because of the more effective use of assessment information and determined teaching, standards in the current Year 6 classes are good in English, mathematics and science. Furthermore, the school's emphasis on developing the pupils' skills of speaking and listening to nurture their expressive language has benefited standards in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties receive sensitive support to boost their self-esteem and this has impacted positively on their academic progress. More able pupils are being challenged effectively to enable them to reach their potential. The school has resolved the issue of the underachievement of girls and they too are making satisfactory progress.

The pupils enter school with attainment that is above average. The pupils now make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, with pockets of good progress, particularly in Year 6. This represents a clear improvement on recent years during which there has been a history of underachievement, reflected in the pupils' performance in national tests. This has been due to a lack of rigour in monitoring children's performance and a lack of challenge in the work set. In recent years, the school has consistently failed to meet its academic targets in the national tests for Year 6 children, and its performance has been amongst the bottom ten percent nationally. Although the current Year 6 pupils are performing better than previous cohorts, and their achievement is satisfactory, they still will not reach their ambitious targets. However, this is an improving situation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure, calm and stimulating environment where pupils feel safe. They feel very confident in the adults that are around them and their enjoyment in coming to school is exceptional. They speak enthusiastically about their lessons and the opportunities outside the classroom that a high proportion of them participate in. Attendance at the school is above the national average and pupils behave extremely well, not through fear or constraint but through being happy members of the school community. They are courteous, friendly and cooperate well together in the classrooms. The school has the gold award under the Healthy Schools accreditation system and pupils respond well to the school's encouragement to lead healthy lives. They are very conscious of what they eat and many benefit from the sporting opportunities available. The school council is taken very seriously, complete with secret ballot box elections, and pupils feel that their voice is heard on important issues. Most of the Year 6 pupils take on the role of being monitors and fulfil various responsible tasks of significant benefit to the school community. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is satisfactory. Whilst pupils are clearly developing strong senses of morality and social responsibility, their cultural and spiritual development is only satisfactory. The school has made good efforts to raise aspirations and imbue pupils with a sense of purpose. Its preparation of pupils for their later lives is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with examples of good practice. Teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships which promote a good climate for learning. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour.

Teachers' planning is thorough and focused so that pupils are clear about what it is they are to learn. Where teaching and learning are consistently good, the pace of learning is brisk and the activities set are well matched to the pupils' needs so that they achieve well. In other classes expectations for their achievement are not quite so high so that pupils do not receive as much challenge. Consequently, their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. The school has a small number of teaching assistants who are skilled at helping pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities besides making valuable contributions in areas such as information and communication technology. Booster classes are successful in helping those in danger of falling behind to work at a faster rate.

The quality of marking is good. However, teachers are not making the best use of the final parts of lessons to reinforce learning. In particular, pupils are not given enough opportunities to explain where they have encountered difficulties so that teachers are more immediately aware of where further support is needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is working hard, especially through 'setting' arrangements in mathematics and English, to ensure that the activities planned match the full range of learners' abilities. Interactive whiteboards are beginning to be used to good effect to help pupils to concentrate and thus improve the pace of learning. While subject guidance to support teachers' planning to provide a more thematic approach to learning is improving, teachers have yet to build in regular links across the curriculum to incorporate the use of ICT, literacy and numeracy.

Many pupils take part enthusiastically in a good range of enrichment activities, including residential visits. The expertise of staff enhances pupils' skills in sport, art, drama and French. These activities help to encourage an active and healthy lifestyle as well as developing social skills. The school's programme for personal, social and health education to help pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy and to care for others is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. They are good for pupils' pastoral development. Staff are committed to ensuring all pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, are happy in school and that they are enjoying their learning in an environment where there is equal opportunity for all pupils. Safeguarding procedures, including Child Protection arrangements and risk assessments are rigorous. Pupils are confident they can talk to an adult if they have any concerns and that they will be dealt with swiftly. The school works well with parents to ensure children attend school regularly and punctually.

The support and guidance pupils receive for their academic learning is satisfactory and improving. Teachers are now setting pupils targets which identify what it is they need to do to improve. These are reviewed half termly. Consequently, all pupils are now receiving the guidance which enables all of them to achieve satisfactorily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management at the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear understanding of her role with regard to improving achievement and has established an unambiguous focus on that. She has shown great drive and determination since the school was put into special measures and has been the key factor in its improvement. There is a strong sense of collective purpose amongst teachers and support staff, which stems from her. The capacity of leaders and managers at other levels has improved. There is greater clarity about roles and responsibilities. A clear framework and timetable for quality assurance activities has been implemented and is leading to improvement. Subject leaders and coordinators are involved in quality monitoring and the capacity to identify what needs to be done to secure improvement for pupils is sound.

Through its programme of monitoring activities the school's leadership team derive a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses. There is a good awareness of the needs of particular groups of pupils, whether it is those with learning difficulties or the more able pupils, and resources are well targeted to meet these needs. Governance has improved. The governing body has implemented a new structure of committees that has a sharper focus on achievement and standards. Governors are keen to be more involved with the school and are developing their capacity to scrutinise and challenge its work. Wide-ranging types of advice and support have come over the last year from the local authority and these have been a major factor in the school's improvement. The school has effective links to a range of other agencies although liaison with the infant school whose pupils transfer to Leas Park are under developed.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Leas Park Junior School, Mansfield Woodhouse, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 8LD

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your friendliness and cooperation during our visit.

The school was last inspected, as you may remember, in October 2006. At that time inspectors judged that the school was not providing well enough for its pupils and that serious steps were needed to improve. I am very glad to write to let you know that the school has improved significantly over the last year. The school no longer needs the special support it has been getting.

We found many things that the school can be pleased about. The real strength is the way the school helps your personal development. We were extremely pleased to hear and see how much you all obviously enjoy your lessons and everything else about school. This shows in your good attendance and excellent behaviour. We are also pleased that all of you are making sound progress at the school, building on the high standards you came into the school with. The teaching you receive has improved over the last year, although we think it needs to improve further. There are many opportunities for you to take responsibility and contribute to the school and most of you do make a very positive contribution.

A lot of hard work is going on to develop the school. The content of what you are taught is changing this year, for example, and we think this will need to be carefully reviewed. New computer technology is being introduced to help teachers in their work. The school has introduced a number of methods of checking on what it does in order to see how things can be improved. Those teachers leading this work need opportunities to develop their skills. We do believe that the staff at the school have a strong commitment to you and to the school and that the school will now continue to develop in the right direction.

We wish you all well for the future.

Bob Roberts

Lead inspector/HMI