

Light Oaks Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105884
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	324287
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Flynn
Headteacher	Mrs L Howard
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
School address	Lancaster Road Salford Lancashire M6 8LU
Telephone number	0161 7891070
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a mixed residential area close to the centre of Salford. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, or from minority ethnic groups are below average. The proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language, or who have statements of special educational need are both below average but rising. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school holds the International Schools Award, the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. It has successfully overcome some recent difficulties largely due to the indomitable spirit of its good headteacher. It is now in a strong position to move forward. The school has a clear strength in its good curriculum. This builds pupils' understanding and acceptance of different cultures at home and across the world, and helps to ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are good.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their four years in the school. Until 2008, the standards of pupils joining the school in Year 3 and leaving it in Year 6 were above average. Standards in science are rising because pupils have a secure understanding of scientific concepts gained through the good investigative work carried out in lessons. Progress in mathematics has been slowing because of variations in the quality of teaching. Pupils whose starting points were lower because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or because of their initial unfamiliarity with English, make satisfactory progress because of the good support all pupils receive.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of the strong focus on spiritual, social, moral and cultural development throughout the school. Large numbers of parents say they value this, and the comment, 'The school has helped my children to become responsible and caring, they have never bullied or experienced bullying', is typical of many. Pupils quickly adopt the high standards of tolerance, respect and responsibility demonstrated by all adults in the school. An atmosphere of calm pervades the school and children say they feel safe and happy. This is apparent in their good manners and smiling faces.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. While some lessons are excellent, there are some that do not offer pupils sufficient challenge. In lessons that were outstanding, a wide range of challenging tasks well matched to their needs, prompted pupils to extend their learning. Pupils were encouraged to be independent and think and learn for themselves. The pace of learning in these lessons was very high, and pupils were enthusiastic. In some other lessons, progress slowed because teachers talked too much, and pupils became passive listeners rather than active learners. This was particularly evident in some mathematics lessons.

The curriculum is good. Its diversity, range and enrichment already have a strong influence on the pupils' personal development. As one parent commented, 'The school provides excellent extra-curricular activities – it's not just an exams factory'. Long-standing and dynamic links with schools in Uganda and Ukraine give pupils a real perspective on mankind. Recent innovations in linking subjects together have been noticed and welcomed by pupils who say they can understand things better when facts and skills they already know are applied and extended in other areas of learning. However, these new developments have yet to show their full impact on the academic progress pupils make.

The school looks after its pupils very well. The current government requirements for safeguarding are met. Because staff and pupils know each other well, and the level of mutual trust is high, adults are able and available to give help or support quickly when it is required. Good links with other professional agencies are used appropriately to support this. Pupils say they feel safe. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The recently introduced whole-school assessment system provides accurate information on the progress pupils are making. Senior leaders are beginning to use this information well to track pupils' progress but it is not yet used by leaders at all levels

to measure the effectiveness of different whole-school initiatives and interventions. Teachers do not yet use the information consistently when planning work in lessons.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school runs calmly on a day-to-day basis. Senior leaders have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The carefully recruited and recently formed group of middle managers are growing into their roles, though the checks they make on the progress of individual pupils in lessons are limited. Parents say they have noticed how the adults in the school now 'pull together as a team'. This augers well for the future, but has yet to show a sustained impact on better progress for pupils. Under its present leadership the school has good capacity for improvement. This is illustrated by the positive changes that have already been made since the last inspection in assessment and the quality of some teaching. Governance is satisfactory. The school deploys its resources soundly and it gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning to raise achievement throughout the school.
- Make more effective use of information about pupils' progress to improve the challenge of the work set in lessons, particularly in numeracy.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are involved in checking the effectiveness of whole school initiatives.

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 on entry to the school in Year 3 have been declining steadily for several years, due largely to demographic changes. Up until 2007 pupils' attainment on entry was above average but for the current Year 3 cohort who joined in 2008 it was average. When pupils left Year 6 in 2007, standards reached in the National tests were above average in English, mathematics and science at both Level 4 and Level 5, significantly so in science at Level 5. However, because these pupils joined the school with above average standards, this represented satisfactory progress. Unvalidated results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2008 were broadly similar to those in 2007. Standards improved in science, but they dropped in mathematics in which the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 fell from above average to average. When considering the starting points of these pupils this also represents satisfactory progress overall. Inspection observations suggest that progress has very recently improved in many classes, but this is not yet either consistent across the school, or sustained over time. No group of pupils underachieves significantly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good and are strengths of the school. Good relationships abound, and pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. They behave well because adults provide good role models, demonstrating strong values of tolerance and respect. Pupils are very proud of their school, show enthusiasm, and clearly like being in school. Attendance is broadly average and unauthorized absence is low. Pupils share their news and express their

opinions with confidence because they know they are listened to by adults. They say they appreciate the opportunities to 'learn socially and in different ways'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is underpinned by opportunities to embrace differences and cultural diversity through the school's international work. Pupils gain a good awareness and appreciation of other lifestyles and cultures. They say that bullying is not an issue 'in our school', a view supported by many parents. Pupils show good understanding of their personal safety and are very aware of the dangers of drugs, smoking and lack of exercise. They know which foods are best for them and that they should eat a healthy diet. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility as monitors, play pals, or as elected members of the school council. Pupils' standards in basic skills are above average, and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent but shows an improving picture overall. Newly appointed teachers have brought new skills and ideas. Consistent strengths include the very positive relationships between staff and pupils. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are industrious. Pupils enjoy their time in school and say that lessons are 'more exciting now'. Teaching assistants make a good contribution in lessons, keeping pupils focused and helping group activities. Some outstanding teaching was seen in classes with older pupils. In the best lessons, teachers capture pupils' attention well by using a range of interesting tasks and practical activities, well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils are challenged to think for themselves and learning moves on rapidly. Where learning is satisfactory, the match between tasks set and pupils' needs is often not close enough. Higher attaining pupils finish work quickly, while those who find learning more difficult fail to gain enough understanding. The marking of pupils' work, especially in literacy and science, shows more consistency as a result of effective staff development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It exceeds the requirements of the National Curriculum by teaching Spanish to all pupils. Planned opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning through visits to museums and other places are used to bring learning to life. Many visitors, including pupils from a school in Ukraine, come to the school to enhance the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of clubs before and after school include information and communication technology (ICT), music and a wide range of sports to promote healthy lifestyles. The recently introduced themed approach to the curriculum is beginning to give pupils the opportunity to develop skills learned in one subject in new and exciting ways in other subjects. A recent project on Space generated great enthusiasm by linking science, art, literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils also gained an opportunity to develop enterprise skills by marketing their imaginary planet as a holiday destination, and holidays were purchased with tokens. Provision for ICT is good and helps to facilitate pupils' understanding and knowledge in many subjects. Well-planned personal, social and health education has increased pupils' confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a very secure environment where the required procedures for child protection and health and safety are in place. Staff care for the pupils very well, and this is much appreciated by parents. Good relationships between staff, pupils and parents help to ensure that children are happy, confident and ready to learn. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that, if needed, help is always available. Vulnerable pupils are well supported. Those who have disabilities and those who need extra adult help because they need a boost to their confidence, receive support promptly and effectively. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced new procedures which check pupils' progress frequently, so staff can identify pupils who are falling behind and take action to support them. Pupils have learning targets in English and mathematics. Their awareness of them and how these can help them to improve their work is developing well although, as yet, is inconsistent between classes and year groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have worked hard to overcome recent difficulties which have been a distraction to the drive for school improvement. There is now a good team spirit within the school, and all staff share an ambitious vision of improving standards. Middle managers are becoming more active in monitoring the effectiveness of learning in their areas of responsibility. School development planning is well balanced and realistic, though it still lacks some sharpness in how closely it checks and identifies what works best. The school's self-evaluation is honest, and based on an accurate measure of how much progress pupils are making. Provision for community cohesion is good, because the school has worked hard for several years to ensure that pupils gain a balanced appreciation of local, national and international perspectives, cultures and beliefs. Resources are soundly and effectively used to support the curriculum, and to ensure that pupils understand why discrimination should be challenged and equality of opportunity upheld. Governance is satisfactory. Under the dedicated and knowledgeable leadership of the long-standing chair, governors have given sound support to the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good because the issues of challenge in teaching and checking on how well the school is doing are being successfully addressed. The school is strongly placed to secure improvement because of: the careful recruitment of new staff; the successful recent implementation of whole-school assessment procedures and the strong encouragement for independent 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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were very impressed with the caring manner you all display. It was a pleasure listening to you talk about Light Oaks School, and realising how proud you are of what you do and learn there.

We found that Light Oaks provides a satisfactory and improving education for you, and below are some of its good aspects.

- The way that all the adults in the school take good care of you.
- The clear leadership provided by the headteacher over recent years, which has ensured that the standards you reach at the end of Year 6 have stayed above average.
- Your very good development as sensible and considerate young people. This is helped in no small measure by the broad curriculum you follow which gives you such a clear appreciation of the rest of the world beyond Light Oaks school, and even beyond Salford and Great Britain.

We found that some things could be done better, so we are asking the school to do the following.

- Make sure that lessons are more consistently of a good quality, particularly in mathematics, so that you can make faster progress.
- Set work in lessons which challenges all of you, which takes advantage of what you already know, and which helps you to think for yourselves.
- Check more closely on how effectively different things are helping you to learn.

This means that you will all find yourselves working harder more often. However, I saw some lessons where you were already working very hard and clearly enjoying what you were doing! So, keep up the good work, continue to be happy, and good luck to you all for the future.