

Pontefract Larks Hill Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108188
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	324720
Inspection date	30 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	209
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeff Allinson
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Larks Hill Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 4RJ
Telephone number	01977 722 845

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, and how well the school leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was collected from the observation of lessons, assessment data, pupils' work, and discussions with pupils, the staff and representatives of the governing body. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own judgements, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate within the report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school where over a half of the pupils attending come from out of the area. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies from year to year but is generally below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises one Reception class. During the past two years, there have been several disruptions to staffing. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Standard, the Activemark, the Artsmark Silver, the British Council International School Award, the ECO green flag and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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 and improving school with a number of outstanding features. Through an unsettled period, strong leadership has resulted in improvement in many aspects of the school's work and ensured that standards have remained above average overall. On entry to the Reception class, children's skills are typical for their age. Through the good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good, and sometimes outstanding progress. Their achievement is good. By the end of the year almost all have achieved the expected levels with about a half exceeding these. Progress and achievement accelerate further in Key Stage 1, so by the end of Year 2 standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. There has been good improvement in standards, particularly in writing for boys. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have been most affected by the upheaval in staffing with a significant proportion not making the gains they should. However, focused teaching and a very wide range of support for groups and individuals have resulted in increased progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6 with some pupils making double the expected gains in the course of a year. As a consequence, the achievement of pupils of all abilities is now good overall. Pupils have made good gains in relation to their starting points at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics and reading are above average. In science, attainment is well above average. Standards in writing are average. Written work shows considerable improvement with the use of a wider vocabulary and better punctuation, but there are residual weaknesses in spelling for many pupils.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously, providing tasks that are tailored to individual needs so pupils of all abilities gain knowledge and skills at a good rate. Classrooms are well organised and skilled teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to the learning of individual pupils and small groups. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but the quality of marking is too variable. In the best practice, comments indicate what has been done well and identify the next steps in learning so pupils know exactly what to do to improve. There is, however, too much difference in the quality of marking between classes and subjects.

The curriculum is excellent. In addition to promoting good academic achievement, there are particular strengths in the provision for sport, the creative arts and conservation activities. This is recognised in the national awards that have been achieved and contributes to pupils' excellent personal development. The outstanding care, support and guidance given by all adults enables pupils to flourish in an atmosphere of trust and security. Safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and safe. They are especially proud of the work they do for the school, church and local community, for example as eco-warriors, and with the sensory garden. Attendance is above average. The great majority of pupils have a very positive attitude to school and behave well, making comments such as 'I like my school because it's like a family' and 'no-one ever gets left out'. Assemblies further a real sense of belonging, supporting the school slogan 'Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM)'. Pupils take a great pride in all they do and readily celebrate the achievement of others, for example letting out a whoop of delight on being informed that they had broken the national record for 'Dutch skipping'.

Leadership and management are good and have been strengthened by the skills of the new deputy headteacher. Visionary, committed leadership and a determination to be the best are at the heart of this dynamic school. The checking of pupils' progress and achievement has

become more rigorous recently and the strategies put into place to bridge gaps in learning are having a positive impact. Leaders have very successfully created a school that embraces all learners. Equality of opportunity for pupils is excellent and at the core of the school's work. As a result pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Equally, pupils with a gift or talent in, for example, sport, science or electronics are helped to progress. Well advanced plans and actions to promote community cohesion, including long-standing links with Cambodia and Africa, are giving pupils a good understanding of other faiths and cultures. Leaders are now establishing links with a school for pupils mainly from Pakistani backgrounds. The governing body is exceptionally organised. It is rigorous in its duties to hold the school to account and makes a significant contribution to its development. Leaders have successfully built on the school's previously good performance. The accurate analysis of pupils' achievements combined with high quality professional development for staff have brought about considerable improvement since the last inspection. With the resolve and skill of the leadership team and the dedication of staff, now the staffing complement is stable, the school is in an excellent position to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection and is now good with outstanding elements. Adults have successfully created a warm, friendly learning environment that effectively promotes all areas of learning both indoors and out. They are particularly skilled at settling quickly children from twelve different nurseries and pre-school groups and giving them the confidence to make friends, try new activities, take responsibility, and work as part of a group. Staff work well together to ensure children acquire a secure foundation in preparation for their transfer to Key Stage 1. A good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities is in place. Children take pleasure in the varied activities provided, and enjoy their learning. For example, children took great delight in making postcards, constructing boats and investigating sand and water as part of their 'seaside' topic. Children's personal skills develop at an exceptional rate. As a result of the high expectations of adults, outstanding gains are also made in communication, language and literacy, though staff recognise more needs to be done to match phonic activities to children's capabilities. Children's safety and welfare are of prime importance and promoted exceptionally well. Strong links with parents support learning very effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in spelling in order to raise standards in writing at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that marking in all classes and subjects reflects the best practice

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
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

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	1
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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

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

First may I say what a delightful time my colleague and I had when we inspected your school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. We especially enjoyed our meal with you and the assembly. We thought the sword dancing was most impressive. It was very clear from our chats, and the questionnaire replies we received from your parents, that you enjoy school and you feel safe and cared for exceptionally well.

Your school is providing you with a good education. As well as working hard, you enjoy lessons, clubs (especially sword dancing), and visits out of school. You are well behaved and your attendance is good. You make good progress because your school is well led. You are taught well and have an excellent curriculum.

There are a couple of areas that would make your school even more successful.

- Those of you in Key Stage 2 are now making good progress in many aspects of your writing, but your spelling needs to improve.
- You understand the Yippee Yellow and Green for Growth marking, but this needs to be used consistently and in all classes and all subjects.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.