

# Lostock Gralam CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111289
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	325339
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Johnson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	129
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Roberto Nericì
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Cheryl Walton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Lostock Gralam Northwich Cheshire CW9 7PT

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 July 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	325339

**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

01606 288004  
01606 352025

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average-size school serving a semi-rural community. Social and economic circumstances are mixed. An average number of pupils are currently known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage begins in Reception. Pre-school and after-school care, on an adjacent site, are not part of the school's inspection. The inspection report for this provision is published separately on the Ofsted website. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and Activemark, as well as the Artsmark Gold 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 with outstanding features. The headteacher's decisive leadership has resulted in good school improvement. The quality of care, guidance and support provided, and pupils' personal development are outstanding.

Pupils enjoy school. They arrive punctually and attend regularly. Their attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are exemplary, and they are invariably polite and well mannered. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall, although pupils' cultural understanding is not as well developed as the other aspects. Pupils experience the wonder of learning, particularly through art and music. Spiritual health and well-being were important features of their recent Healthy School week. Relationships are excellent. Pupils are adamant that bullying and racism do not occur and that they are safe in the playground. Pupils gain some knowledge and understanding of faiths and cultures around the world, which has been extended, for example, through project links with a school in Poland. However, their understanding of diverse communities throughout the world is not extensive, because the school's promotion of this wider understanding is not well developed. A sensible diet and lots of exercise are high on pupils' personal agendas, and they know how to keep themselves safe. During the inspection, gardening club members were anxiously awaiting a break in the weather to allow them to harvest the vegetables on their allotment, and younger children in the school made it perfectly clear, in their writing, that dragons are not healthy eaters. Pupils contribute extremely well to their school and local community. They are keen to take on additional responsibilities and support others. Pupils are beginning to develop good work-related skills by working in groups to organise fundraising enterprises.

Standards are rising and pupils achieve well. There has been an improvement in attainment at Key Stage 1. All pupils reached the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in the current year. This is above the national expectation. Although standards in the current Year 6 are average, the school's data show that these pupils have achieved well given their starting points. In 2006, there was a significant drop in standards at the end of Key Stage 2. This led to swift action by the leadership of the school; the systems for checking pupils' progress were completely revised and there was a strong drive to focus on the achievement of individual pupils. There is now a rising trend overall. Despite this improvement, the school is aware that there is still work to be done to raise the number of pupils, at both key stages, reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics. There is particularly effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and many exceed their targets.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' good use of assessment information to plan pupils' targets and check their progress has been a major factor in bringing about better progress and standards. Lessons are lively and enjoyable and pupils appreciate the fact that, 'there is always lots to do'. The curriculum is good. It enables pupils to achieve well and enjoy their learning. Residential visits are among the 'lasting memories' that Year 6 pupils will take with them when they move on. The school's participation in the Wider Opportunities scheme has enriched the lives of pupils in Years 3 and 4 through musical performance.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and governors provide clear direction and have set Lostock Gralam firmly on a path to improvement. Revised systems for checking pupils' academic progress and reviewing targets have not only had a positive impact on the guidance pupils receive, but have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching. As

a consequence, progress has gathered pace and standards are improving. Pupils' personal development has thrived and the school has good capacity to improve further. The headteacher is ably supported by a strong senior leadership team and committed staff whose roles as subject leaders are developing well along with their accountability for raising achievement and standards. Systems for monitoring the school's work are robust and contribute well to leaders' accurate identification of strengths and weaknesses. Challenging targets reflect the school rising expectations. The school ensures equality of opportunity and works very effectively with families and local groups to build a cohesive school community. Nevertheless, the promotion of community cohesion on a wider scale still has some way to go. Governors challenge and support the school in equal measure. Through self-evaluation they have formed a very good overview of their effectiveness, and how best to measure the school's progress. Finances are managed carefully to ensure good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because effective leadership ensures that provision for their learning and development is managed well. When children enter Reception their skills are below those typically expected, particularly in the areas of communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of their personal social development. By the end of Reception all children are working within their early learning goals and some exceed them. Children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Exciting and challenging activities encourage them to be active, independent learners. They readily supply their own ideas about what they want to learn and teachers build well on those to plan experiences which stimulate their learning well. During the inspection, for example, children worked industriously at building castles from large cardboard boxes, and painting shields as they prepared to repel dragons. Teaching of letters and sounds is planned well and effectively boosts children's confidence so that they enjoy tackling early reading and writing skills on their own. Provision for children's welfare is good. The school's links with parents and their contribution to their children's learning are outstanding features. All staff members observe and record children's development closely, share this information with parents, and plan the next steps in learning. Continuous provision as children move into Year 1 is an added bonus both for those who need additional challenges and those who need to consolidate their early skills.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the numbers of pupils who attain higher levels in writing and mathematics at both key stages.
- Ensure that pupils have better opportunities to recognise diversity and its impact on communities throughout the world.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. There has been steady improvement over the last two years because of the decisive action taken by school leaders to address a dip in standards. There is now good progress throughout the school. There has been some accelerated progress in Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 3 and 4, as the new systems, and their impact on teaching and learning have taken effect. Standards are improving. Current school data show a continuing rising trend

at Key Stage 1 with above average standards at the end of Year 2. Data for the small Year 6 cohort show that all have met their expected targets and that, although there was a particularly good performance in science, standards overall are average. Nevertheless, a current focus for the school is to raise the number of pupils who attain Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and Level 5 at Key Stage 2 in both writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other additional needs are given the good support they need to help them progress well and reach their particular targets. Some of those pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' above average attendance and outstanding behaviour are clear indications of how much they enjoy school. They enjoy immensely the chances they have to use their ideas creatively and the opportunities to share their 'shining' achievements with others. Pupils are extremely mindful of others and keen to take on caring roles in the playground when new children arrive. This is indicative of their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school council actively represents the voice of all pupils and is watchful over the healthy contents of lunch boxes. Council members in the past have successfully negotiated some good improvements. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and work hard to ensure it runs smoothly. Recycling and road safety officers keep others abreast of these important issues and all are intent on converting their bronze Eco award to silver. Pupils are beginning to expand their preparation for the world of work by taking a leading role in fundraising events, listening to positive role models such as former pupils, and through activities beyond the school which help them to become active members of a community. These roles, in addition to their good acquisition of basic skills prepare them very well for the next stages of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils know that their contributions to lessons are valued so they are confident enough to 'have a go' and know that they can rely on their teachers' support. This strength in relationships underpins the hard work and good progress seen throughout the school. Teaching assistants are an essential part of the team and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Lessons are planned well with clear learning objectives for different groups within the classes. Occasionally, these are not shared with pupils until a later stage in the lesson so they are not clear at the beginning of what precisely is expected of them. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and good use is made of teachers' particular expertise to boost standards and achievement as seen currently in science. Teachers engage pupils well in learning by their good use of resources and a variety of teaching methods which help to bring lessons to life. There is generally good practice in marking where helpful comments show pupils where they have done well and what they need to do better. At present, this is more powerfully embedded in literacy and some science books than it is in other subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A good range of activities outside lesson times enables pupils to foster their skills and interests well and develop outstanding personal qualities. The school is making good progress towards establishing French as a curriculum subject. Visits and visitors to school enrich pupils' experiences and stimulate their learning and enjoyment of the curriculum. More emphasis is being placed on allowing pupils to practise skills across a range of subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT), for example, is used increasingly as a tool for mathematical or geographical research. There is already a good range and purpose to pupils' writing. Provision for physical education and the arts are equally strong and provide good opportunities for pupils to achieve well in those areas. Through a programme which deals with social and emotional growth, as well as support from outside agencies, the school prepares pupils well to make informed decisions about their personal well-being and the importance of sensible relationships.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Parents agree overwhelmingly that their children are well cared for. They are full of praise for the way they are received in school. Many typically comment on their children's good progress and on how happy they are to come to school. Pupils fully endorse that view and say that there is always an adult on hand when needed. The school goes out of its way to support pupils and families through difficult times and to ensure that all are welcomed equally into the school community. Family learning is a central feature of school life and is a major influence on the extent to which pupils and parents work together at home and in school. Sensitive support for the most vulnerable pupils helps them through their difficulties and ensures that they achieve alongside others.

Safeguarding requirements are fully in place and pupils know how to stay safe. Guidance on relationships and behaviour is rooted in the school's strong Christian ethos. Attendance is checked rigorously to make sure it remains consistently high. Systems for monitoring progress and keeping pupils on track are very effective. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. She has successfully harnessed the commitment of staff and built up their strong potential to drive the school forward. Previous issues have been dealt with and the school has moved on. There have been good developments in provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in the quality of care provided. Senior leaders fulfil a crucial role in monitoring the school's performance and helping to establish an accurate overview of all its work. Equality of opportunity is a central driving force in the school's development. To that end, staff and governors work hard to maintain the school's position at the heart of its community as a place of learning for all. There are strong links with the church, local schools and colleges, and other community groups. Pupils have also benefited from links with local businesses. A wider concept of community cohesion, however, has been slower to develop, and the school recognises the need to take links with contrasting communities



beyond their embryonic stage. Governors fulfil their duties well and evaluate the school's work, and their own effectively.

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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	2

### 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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

Inspection of Lostock Gralam Church of England Primary School, Northwich, CW9 7PT

Thank you very much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I came to inspect your school recently. I had a really good time talking to you and finding out about the things you like. I enjoyed those scary stories about dragons that eat people and not vegetables! I was very impressed with your politeness and good manners, and your behaviour is excellent. I also found out that your attendance is above average. Well done! All of these things are very important, so do keep them up.

Lostock is a good school. You make good progress in your work. Even so, the standards you reach could still be higher. You told me you enjoy your lessons and I can see why, because your teachers plan interesting things for you to do so that you learn well. The grown-ups in school take excellent care of you and your headteacher works really hard to make sure you have a good education. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and, among lots of other things, build smashing castles.

I happen to know that your parents, teachers and school governors are just as proud of your school as you are and want it to be even better. Therefore, I have asked your teachers to do two things. The first is to help more of you to reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The second thing is to help you to learn more about different communities in this and other countries, so you have a better understanding of how they live their lives and of what is important to them.