

Liss Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115925
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326291
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Pritchard
Headteacher	Mr A Burford
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
School address	Hillbrow Road Liss GU33 7LQ
Telephone number	01730 892292
Fax number	01730 892292

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Liss Junior School is a similar size to most primary schools. It has fewer than average pupils from minority ethnic groups and almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little above average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and a small number of them attend the onsite 'learning centre'. The school runs a small daily breakfast club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Liss Junior School is satisfactory. The school has a number of good features, relating to its good curriculum and the effective way it cares for pupils and promotes their good personal development. However, standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

The great majority of parents thoroughly approve of the school and recognise how much pupils enjoy attending. One typical comment was, 'Since starting at Liss Junior School my child's confidence and learning have progressed dramatically. In our view the happy, inclusive atmosphere is really exceptional'. Some parents expressed concerns about the way the school liaises with them. Inspection evidence indicates that the school works well to keep in touch with parents.

The way the school is led and managed is satisfactory. Declining mathematics standards have lowered pupils' overall achievement in recent years and have proved difficult to address. The school has shown great determination and, in recent months, has finally got to grips with the issue. Recent changes have helped to reverse the downward trend, but have not yet had sufficient time to reap their full benefit. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, from their average starting points, is satisfactory. At the heart of this improvement is the school's increasingly effective use of assessment information to identify areas of concern and to do something about them. Plans for the future are both convincing and relevant and are fully supported by the committed governing body. Team leaders provide good role models for teachers and work well to improve standards. They are not yet being as effective at influencing the quality of learning across the school to ensure consistently better progress in all classes.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The ethos in classrooms is calm and pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They are well managed by teachers, who know their needs well and plan accordingly, so that all pupils are effectively supported and challenged. Teachers have good subject knowledge, as was amply demonstrated in one good mathematics lesson, where pupils received effective preparation for an important test. However, some lessons are slow in pace and pupils have too few opportunities to become actively involved. The curriculum is good and provides interesting opportunities for pupils to learn actively. When lessons incorporate these activities, pupils find them more enjoyable. The curriculum is good and enriched by numerous visits and visitors and by a splendid variety of popular extra-curricular opportunities.

Pupils are well cared for, especially those with moderate learning difficulties. The clear, accessible information pupils receive about how to improve their work makes a strong contribution to their achievement. The school's safeguarding procedures are robust. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of exercise and diet in growing up healthily. Many practise what they preach through their keen participation in sport and by restricting their intake of tempting sweet foods to a minimum. However, they have only limited understanding of other cultures within the United Kingdom. Based on its track record, the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics.

- Ensure all lessons have good pace and engage pupils fully, providing better opportunities for active learning.
- Develop pupils' understanding of Britain as a multicultural society.

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

Pupils' achievement, including those who have moderate learning difficulties, is satisfactory. They enter the school with standards that vary a little, year by year, but are generally similar to the national average. By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science.

There are some variations to this pattern. In recent years, while standards in English and science have been maintained, standards and achievement in mathematics have fallen. In the 2008 national tests, while standards in mathematics were average, pupils' achievement from their starting points was inadequate. The school's reaction to this weakness has been rigorous. There have been significant changes to the way the subject is managed. The school now analyses and uses assessment information more thoroughly to help in the early identification of pupils whose progress is slipping. Rapid interventions to support these pupils have already started to drive standards up. Current achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school life and have positive relationships with their peers and all adults in the school. They trust their teachers to provide them with good advice and help, if required. Attendance at school has improved, and is above average. While outside play can be a little rumbustious at times, classroom behaviour is consistently good. This makes an important contribution to the calm, purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that the school reacts to any such occurrences promptly and effectively. The school provides clear guidance on how to stay safe and pupils have a good grasp of the issues relating to safe travel to and from school and relating to internet security.

Pupils' contribution to the community is good. They participate enthusiastically in the school council and are happy that the school often acts on their views to bring about improvements. Pupils gladly take on other responsibilities, such as acting as lunch monitors. They also take part in numerous local community events. For example, the choir sings carols in the village during the run-up to Christmas.

Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future life and learning. They show growing independence and confidence, but their progress in key skills such as literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but, due to restricted opportunities, their understanding of other cultures in Britain is limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning because teaching is satisfactory. Classroom routines are clear and this ensures that learning takes place in a well-structured environment. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, but they do not always support pupils' learning sufficiently well in all phases of lessons.

Classroom organisation is good and pupils are well managed. Pupils behave well in lessons, are very keen to learn, and listen carefully to their teachers. However, the pace of lessons is not always brisk enough and so time is occasionally wasted. In some lessons, teachers can be too dominant and this restricts pupils' independence. When teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work actively, for example when discussing their work with each other, pupils' learning is good. There was a good example of this during an art lesson where pupils were varnishing pottery heads and writing evaluations of their own work. This helped clarify their thinking as well as developing other skills and qualities such as independence, teamwork and cooperation.

The school is developing a comprehensive range of assessment information. This is being used with increasing effectiveness to support learning and to identify groups of pupils who require additional help or greater challenge. However, its use to promote higher standards, especially in mathematics, has not yet had sufficient positive effect.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The relevant, balanced curriculum covers all the required elements and promotes pupils' personal development well. Extensive cross-curricular links and good use of the locality further increase pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning. This is supplemented by a range of visitors to the school who bring their experience of the wider world to further enrich pupils' learning. The school is developing video conferencing to improve provision of multicultural education and enable pupils to expand their understanding of other nations and cultures. The curriculum takes good account of the full range of abilities and gives all groups of pupils the opportunity to progress.

Information and communication technology is used well to support learning across the curriculum. Involvement in a school health week and an effective personal, social and health education programme, effectively support pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school's extensive resources are well used to support and extend learning.

The good range of clubs and activities supports other aspects of pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes great pains to ensure that statutory requirements for pupils' safety are fully met. This was exemplified during the inspection when an inadvertent triggering of the fire alarm prompted the exceptionally calm and efficient evacuation of the building.

Pupils rightly consider that they are well cared for and they get on very well with their teachers. They appreciate the school awards system, which gives wider recognition of their successes.

The breakfast club helps those who attend make a positive, well-nourished start to their day. Those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive well-focused support that benefits their achievement. The learning unit provides high-quality provision for a small group of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Although recently established, there is convincing evidence that pupils' welfare is being effectively promoted. This small group of pupils are achieving well.

Recent improvements to the systems for assessing and tracking progress enable teachers to provide pupils with good quality academic support and guidance. While marking is encouraging, it does not always show pupils how to improve their work. However, pupils benefit from clearly written targets for improvement which they find helpful. They are fully involved in assessing their success at reaching their targets and setting new ones. In consequence, they clearly understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, ably supported by his leadership team, gives clear direction to the work of the school. Self-evaluation helps school leaders identify the key priorities for improvement. These are sensibly linked to actions that are measured against improvements to the quality of learning.

Governors know the school well through information provided by senior leaders and, increasingly, through their own monitoring. This allows them to play a supportive yet challenging role in managing the school's strategic development. They promote the school well within the community by their careful management of the extended care provision in the learning centre.

The school has forged helpful links with other providers, such as nearby infant and secondary schools. The East Hampshire Education Partnership is at an early stage of development but the school's involvement provides exciting opportunities to pool resources and improve provision. The school is satisfactory in developing community cohesion within the school and local setting. The very good video conferencing facilities afford good opportunities for further development at a national and global level. The new learning centre is a real asset to the school and provides additional expertise in supporting pupils with particular learning needs.

The school development plan prioritises the most important areas for improvement and provides a good template for the determined action being taken to address these issues. As a result, issues from the last inspection, such as using data to track pupils' progress, have been tackled well and many strengths from the previous inspection have been maintained. However, standards have not risen, so improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

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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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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	2
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?	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Liss Junior School, Liss, GU33 7LQ

I would like to thank you for the help that you gave the inspectors on our recent visit to the school. We judged that you go to a satisfactory and improving school. We could see that it is getting better and this will not surprise you, as many of you think the same.

You enter and leave school with average standards in English, mathematics and science, so your achievement is satisfactory. The teachers have worked hard to improve your performance in mathematics and you are doing better in this subject this year. The way you are taught is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and your learning is helped by your good behaviour. Well done! Some lessons are a little slow and could be more interesting. The curriculum (the mixture of things you study) is good and you told us how much you enjoy the many popular clubs and societies.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, staff and governors work hard to help you improve your work. You are well cared for and we think the learning centre is especially good. You also receive good advice through the targets you are set. All of this helps your good personal development and it is good to know you participate so keenly in the school council and in the many fundraising activities.

We have asked the school to focus on improving three main areas:

- use all possible methods to improve your standards, especially in mathematics
- make all teaching more interesting by increasing the opportunities for you to be actively involved in your learning
- give you more opportunities to find out about other cultures in Britain.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was good meeting you.

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector