

The Lancaster School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 120686 |
| Local Authority | Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 327340 |
| Inspection date | 2 July 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Nelson |

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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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 145 |
| 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 | Mrs Elizabeth Cawthra |
| Headteacher | Miss Jane Metcalfe |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 May 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | 82 Jasmin Road Birchwood Lincoln Lincolnshire LN6 0QQ |
| Telephone number | 01522685078 |
| Fax number | 01522690374 |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Whether the school has sustained the improving picture of standards and achievement.
- The impact the school's nurture programme is having on the personal and academic development of pupils, including attendance and exclusion rates.
- Whether the school has narrowed the gap in standards between girls and boys and between subjects.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, looking at children's work, records of assessments, school policies and plans, scrutiny of the school's website, discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size infant school and nursery serving a housing estate on the edge of Lincoln. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is very high. An above average proportion of pupils need extra help with their learning and an average proportion has a statement of their special educational needs. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a small number of pupils from Eastern Europe who do not have English as their home language although all are fluent in it. The school runs a breakfast club that is open each school day morning from 8 am. Children in Nursery and Reception are catered for in an Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The school has the Activemark, Artsmark silver, Investors in People and Healthy School's status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has improved since its last inspection and has a good capacity to get even better. Parents think very highly of the school and several wrote glowing comments on the inspection questionnaires. For example one wrote, 'we have two children in school and both have blossomed through their learning. Both are happy'. Others wrote, 'the school is good all round' and 'I believe the school performs well'. Standards are rising. Children start school with skills and knowledge much lower than those expected of their age. They make good progress in their learning so that by Year 2 standards have improved but are currently a bit below average. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils or between different subjects. Pupils who need extra help with their learning do well because of the very good support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. Those learning English also do well because of the sensitive support they receive. The school's very good records of how well pupils are doing show that the improving trend in standards looks set to continue.

A particular strength of the school is the outstanding way that staff care for the pupils. Each pupil is cherished as an individual and staff go out of their way to meet their specific learning, social and emotional needs. One particular success this year has been the establishment of nurture provision in school with the support of the local authority. Staff recognise that some pupils find it hard to behave well all the time and this resulted in a high number of incidents and exclusions in the last school year. An excellent partnership was established with a neighbouring school with expertise in working with such pupils. The result has been a first rate nurture group that has led to a dramatic drop in behaviour incidents and no exclusions at all this year. Parents of pupils who have benefited from the nurture provision insisted on meeting the inspectors to praise what the school has done. Others sent written comments including, 'nurture group has been absolutely invaluable to my child' and 'my child would not be the person he has become if it were not for nurture group'. The improvements mean that behaviour and personal development overall are good. There has also been a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement which are also good. Lessons are no longer disturbed because those who used to have difficulty in managing their own behaviour now stop and think first. Pupils have been successfully integrated into normal classes after receiving the benefits of this excellent nurture provision. Parents say they have benefited from nurture provision, as their children are much better behaved out of school too. The provision of the nurture group and its success is typical of the school's excellent focus on helping all pupils to do their best and take advantage of all that the school offers. The school is currently considering ways in which the nurture provision can be maintained in the future.

The school's success in nurturing pupils is due to the quality of the staff and their commitment and dedication. One parent commented, 'the teachers are approachable and always make time for you' while another wrote, 'the staff are second to none and the children have fun learning'. This view is confirmed in discussion with pupils and in observing lessons. Pupils listen to the teachers and to each other and grow in confidence in offering their suggestions and ideas. When their enthusiasm threatens to run away with them, teachers gently remind them of the need to take turns to speak and order is instantly restored. Pupils enjoy learning because teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teaching makes very good use of information and communication technology to enthuse pupils, as in two lessons when they watched videos of the race between the hare and the tortoise. Lessons like these also illustrated

the effective way in which teaching helps pupils to acquire not only the literacy and numeracy skills they need but also engages them in considering moral and social issues. In these two lessons, for instance, pupils considered the attitudes of the boastful hare and the modest tortoise and concluded that boasting was not good. Parents appreciate this aspect of the school's work with one commenting, 'children are taught manners, respect and kindness'. While teaching is good in most lessons, occasionally it dips to satisfactory when the pace of a lesson drops and pupils sit a little too long on the carpet.

The school's success stems from the good quality of its leadership and management. The headteacher has galvanised her staff into a cohesive team who all share a common vision for the future and a commitment to continuous improvement. She and her staff and governors have an accurate picture of how good the school is and what is needed to make it even better. Governance is good. Governors meet all their statutory obligations including those relating to safeguarding. Several governors are fairly new to their roles and recognise their need to gain experience and expertise but they are highly committed and supportive. They are also confident in challenging the school's leaders and holding them to account.

Staff know the importance of good behaviour and personal development for pupils' learning and have worked tirelessly and very successfully on this aspect. The school has established a successful breakfast club where pupils receive good care and attention. They enjoy a good range of activities and a healthy breakfast that gets them ready for the start of the school day. Staff know the community the school serves very well and go out of their way to promote community cohesion. The good curriculum helps pupils to learn about the world beyond their immediate community, with many displays around the school showing work on different countries and cultures. Pupils from other countries are exceedingly well integrated into the school community. Excellent links with neighbouring schools and other agencies ensure a smooth transition between the infant and junior schools. The school maintains close links with the education welfare officer and works hard to improve attendance and punctuality. Despite all the school's encouragement, however there is persistent absence and lateness from a small number of families. This means that not only do those pupils miss important parts of lessons but, on occasions, the learning of others is disturbed as latecomers settle into class.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start to their education. They enter from a very low starting point and make good progress in all areas of learning. This year, the majority of children are attaining levels close to those typically found in all areas of learning by the end of Reception. Their skills are weakest in personal, social and emotional development and in language. Good induction and welfare arrangements, including links with the local Sure Start group help children to settle and thrive in the caring and supportive environment. The small classes in Nursery and the arrangement whereby children are grouped by ability ensure that all children are able to learn at the pace most suited to their ability. Having a single unit for both Nursery and Reception children and free access to the well resourced outdoor area means all children in Early Years Foundation Stage regularly play and learn together. Staff throughout the unit plan together and ensure there is a good balance between activities where children discover things for themselves and those where they work with an adult.

Learning and development are good. In some lessons the pace is faster than others. Topics, such as the 'sports day theme', span all areas of learning. For example, children use rosettes to identify first, second and third while others make tally charts of the most popular sports.

Personal development and well-being are good. A strength of the school is the high emphasis on the development of independence in selecting and carrying out activities. Children's behaviour is good. The unit knows that there is now a need to focus on the development of children's speaking skills even further, making sure that planning identifies opportunities for children to practise their new vocabulary in all sessions. Good leadership and excellent teamwork provide an exciting learning environment in which all children are valued. Good assessment at all stages enables teachers to identify individual needs at an early stage and take effective action. The unit is at an early stage of measuring just how much progress children make and sharing this with parents

What the school should do to improve further

- Liaise with the local authority and other agencies on how best to maintain and develop nurture provision within the school.
- Continue to work closely with families and other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce persistent absence and lateness.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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? | 2 |
| 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

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ 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 |

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

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|---|---|
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 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 | 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 | 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**

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Lancaster School, Birchwood, Lincoln, LN6 0QQ

Thank you for making Mrs Yates and I so welcome when we came to visit your school in the summer. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think yours is a good school. One of the best things about it is the way the adults all look after you so well. They go out of their way to make you feel safe and secure in school. They help you with your work so that your learning is good. They also help you to get on with each other well so that behaviour is good. They know that a few children find it hard to behave well all the time. That is one reason they set up the nurture group which has been a great success. It has helped children to manage their own behaviour so that everyone can learn better. We have asked the headteacher to try to make sure that the nurture group carries on in the future.

Most of you attend school regularly and arrive in time for the start of each day. However, a few of you have too much time off and do not always get to school on time. We have asked the headteacher to work with your parents to make sure that all of you come to school regularly and on time so that you do not miss any of the exciting lessons and events like sports day that the teachers plan for you.

Your school has got better since its last inspection three years ago. We think it can get better still because the teaching is good and the way the adults care for you is excellent. Your parents think so too and wrote lots of nice comments for us. You can help your school to get better by always being on your best behaviour, helping each other to remember how to behave and by working hard in your lessons. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector