

Larkfields Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122575
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327760
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike J Barrett
Headteacher	Mr Peter Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 March 2006
School address	Coronation Road Nuthall Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG16 1EP
Telephone number	0115 9194343
Fax number	0115 9190524
Email address	peter.taylor@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Inspection number	327760

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation documents, pupil assessment information and key policies, including those for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. Inspectors also took account of parents' responses in 106 questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress and attainment of pupils currently in Year 5 and Year 6, particularly in mathematics and boys' writing
- the impact the school's strategies for promoting community cohesion are having on pupils' personal development
- the effectiveness of school leadership in monitoring school performance and driving improvement, particularly in relation to developing teaching quality.

Information about the school

Larkfields is an average sized junior school. Almost all pupils are of a White British background and have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is below average as is that with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about the same as that in most other schools. The school holds the Active Mark Award and the Silver Eco School Award, and is working towards the Healthy School Award. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 3 is broadly average.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Larkfields Junior School provides a good education for its pupils. The headteacher, staff and governors lead the school well and there is a strong emphasis on positive achievement for all, across every aspect of school life. Staff and governors work hard to provide an attractive, welcoming and encouraging learning environment. This is a very harmonious community and pupils contribute much to it. They take responsibility readily, behave well and are respectful of their peers, adults and visitors, reflecting the school's ethos and values. Pupils feel safe and secure. They much enjoy school life, as reflected in their above average rates of attendance. Pupils feel safe and secure, and respond to the requests of their teachers willingly. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of diet and fitness to their health. They take full advantage of and achieve very good standards in the numerous additional activities, sports and clubs provided. While pupils make a strong contribution to the life of the school, their contributions to the local community are more limited and they do not have the opportunity to work alongside others from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Pupils make good progress because teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. This is having a positive effect on boys' writing and attainment generally in English and science where standards in Year 6, although about average, are rising. Progress in mathematics is also improving, although attainment has lagged behind the other two subjects and continues to do so. One of the underlying causes of this weaker performance was related to inconsistency in teaching quality in the lower years in the school. Because teaching in these years has improved, pupils are being provided with a better mathematical foundation, but the residual effect of the previous underachievement is still apparent in Years 5 and 6 for some pupils.

The headteacher and deputy are leading initiatives to raise attainment. Thorough systems for tracking pupils' progress to their targets have been introduced to provide better information to guide teaching and provide early identification of those pupils who may be falling behind so that additional support can be provided. These systems are still being refined in order to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. In some classes teachers are now focusing on ways of helping pupils to better understand their next steps in learning but more remains to be done to embed

such approaches across the school as a whole. In many classes regular and helpful guidance and correction is provided through marking, but this is not entirely consistent.

The capacity for sustaining improvement is good because challenging targets are set, morale is high and staff understand the school's strengths and work willingly together to tackle weaknesses. Checks on teaching made by the headteacher and senior leaders, are thorough, accurate and focus on pupils' learning. The school's improvement plan has the right priorities and criteria for checking their progress towards them are specific enough to enable governors to challenge how rapidly the school is meeting them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, so that standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 are consistently above average from 2010 by:
 - extending the use of assessment information to ensure that work is pitched at the correct level for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring pupils' individual targets are understood by all pupils, accurately reflect their learning needs and are monitored by teachers
 - extending the existing good practice in the marking of pupils' work to ensure that they are provided with clear written guidance on the next steps in learning.

- Develop and implement an effective strategy to promote community cohesion and improve the contribution pupils make to the wider community by:
 - analysing the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context
 - preparing and implementing an action plan to enable pupils to work alongside children who have different experiences to share
 - evaluating the impact of the school's work to promote community cohesion on a regular basis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' progress was good in virtually all lessons observed. Pupils enjoy their learning very much, behave well and are always attentive in lessons. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups progress as well as their peers. Attainment, as measured by Year 6 national tests, is broadly average. In most years attainment in English and science is above that in mathematics. In English, pupils' listening, speaking and reading skills are above average and ahead of their writing standards. However, concerted action to improve pupils' writing, particularly that of boys, is having a positive effect and standards are rising. As a result pupils' progress in English, as in science, is good. Staff are also working hard to raise attainment in mathematics, and with some success. However, although pupils are making better progress in the subject, particularly in Years 5 and 6, attainment continues to lag behind attainment in English. Although the progress pupils make, including that of those with learning

difficulties, is good, the challenges offered to some lower attaining pupils within classes varies. In some lessons their progress is slowed because the same success criteria are set for all pupils and it is not possible for lower attainers to achieve them.

In discussion, pupils show that they are tolerant, well mannered and polite. They have a well-developed understanding of spiritual, moral and social issues, and a satisfactory understanding of different faiths and cultures. Pupils have a growing understanding of environmental issues and the interdependent nature of the world today. They are eager to take on responsibilities and contribute to the school community, although opportunities to contribute to the wider community are more limited. The school council is active and pupils are proud of what they have achieved. The good progress pupils are making in the development of basic skills together with their good work and study habits provide a good preparation for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the few satisfactory lessons, too little attention was given to the range of pupils' abilities when setting learning tasks. Key characteristics of the good or better teaching observed are:

- high behaviour expectations and good class management promoting good and often excellent behaviour in lessons
- clear learning objectives that are regularly referred to during the lesson to consolidate what is being learned

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

- effective starters to lessons which swiftly engage pupils and very effective plenary sessions which summarise pupils’ learning
- good questioning in class discussions, founded on a secure subject knowledge
- good quality assessments made of pupils’ work, particularly in writing.

The school has introduced a rigorous assessment and tracking system that enables pupils’ progress to be monitored more closely. Alongside this initiative the school has also introduced a system by which pupils can assess their own progress against specified success criteria. However, the success criteria are not always suitable for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are being provided with next step targets for their learning. Where these are used well, pupils are clear about their current working levels and keen to use their next steps to help them move on. This is a work in progress and the practice is not yet routine to pupils’ learning.

The good curriculum has been maintained since the last inspection. The effective use of information and communication technology brings many exciting images into classrooms, which stimulate pupils’ interest. There is outstanding provision for music and physical education. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the curriculum offered in these subjects and their attainment, consequently, is much above that expected. The curriculum meets pupils’ needs well. For example, challenging activities are provided for higher attaining pupils as well as extra practice for those who need to improve their basic skills. An excellent range of well attended additional activities, clubs and visits add interest and help to promote pupils’ enjoyment of learning. Displays that celebrate pupils’ achievements and provide valuable information for pupils to learn contribute to a stimulating learning environment. The care and support for pupils is good. All pupils are known individually and they have absolute confidence in the school. Parents reported several noteworthy examples of how staff support the most needy pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff work closely and effectively together, which has led to successful action to tackle the action points identified in the last inspection. As a result the way leaders at all levels monitor the work of the school has improved and this underpins the drive and ambition to improve the school. The headteacher, with key staff, is driving improvements in standards and the benefits are seen in English and science. Although standards are slower to improve in mathematics, pupils’ achievement is improving. Individual subject areas are led and managed effectively with staff fulfilling their roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. They drive

initiatives and share up-to-date information concerning their areas through staff briefings and training events. Equality of opportunity is good; all pupils have opportunities to take part in all that the school provides. Staff and governors provide good standards of care and there are good systems for safeguarding pupils' welfare, safety and security, including their knowledge of how to stay safe.

Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's main strengths and where improvement is needed. They fulfill their statutory duties well. With the staff, they have planned to meet the right priorities to raise standards. Governors are adept at challenging how well the school is tackling priorities and evaluating the impact of changes. Staff work well with outside agencies, families and carers to help pupils achieve well. The school's understanding of its community context is reflected in the links it has through fund raising for a variety of charities. Its work to promote community cohesion is satisfactory. The school does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work alongside those from different backgrounds, so that individual pupils gain a real insight into what life is like for others in different contexts.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Virtually all have only praise for the school. They have great confidence in the staff, the headteacher and in the quality of teaching. Just under a half of the questionnaires were returned. These indicate that children enjoy school very much. Parents value the school's learning environment and the many additional activities provided. Parents commented that staff are approachable and that the encouragement they give boosts their children's confidence and desire to do well. Inspectors agree with these positive comments.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Larkfields Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 106 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 218 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	40	3	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.

Progress: the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes

include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.

Capacity to improve:

the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.

Leadership and management:

the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkfields Junior School, Coronation Road, Nuthall,
Nottingham, NG16 1EP.

Following our visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to tell you what we found out. Before I do, I would like to say thank you for making us feel so welcome and making our visit one that we will remember for a long time. We have told your teachers how you were all really helpful and polite, and it was good to hear how much you enjoy school. We particularly enjoyed seeing how well you care for each other and listening to your singing in assembly.

We agree with you and your parents that this is a good school and one that is helping you to do well. This is seen in the good progress that you make as you move through the school. Your good and often excellent behaviour in lessons is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on making your work interesting and helping you to learn. This is one of the reasons why you are doing well. We have asked your teachers to make this even better, particularly in mathematics, by making more use of assessment information in planning the work you do in lessons and, when they mark your work, to give you clear written guidance on your next steps in learning.

There is a really friendly and positive atmosphere in the school and relationships between you and the staff are excellent. The curriculum is enriched by the exceptionally wide range of visits and after-school activities that broaden your experiences. To broaden these further we have asked the school to develop links with other schools so that you will be able to work alongside children who have different experiences to share. You know that all the staff take good care of you and work hard to keep you safe and healthy. Your headteacher leads the school well and, together with the governors, makes sure that you make the most of your time there.

You are key players in the school's success and, having met you, we know you will all want to continue to play your part in helping it to be even better. Through your hard work and the care you show each other, together with willingness to take on responsibility, you all help to make this such a happy community.

Yours faithfully

Dr Kenneth Thomas
Lead inspector

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