

Lower Heath CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123483
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	327920
Inspection date	8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	72
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	Delwyn Davies
Headteacher	Cathy Rutherford
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lower Heath Prees Whitchurch SY13 2BT
Telephone number	01948 840524
Fax number	01948 840524

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Lower Heath C of E Primary is a smaller-than-average primary school. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. No pupils are at the early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises a Reception class taught jointly with Years 1 and 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lower Heath C of E Primary is a good school. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards in most years other than in Year 6. The school has been through a difficult few years during which staff turnover was high and as a result, pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, were not achieving as well as they should. The school has come through this period well and is rapidly improving under the good leadership of the headteacher whose unrelenting drive to raise standards is shared enthusiastically by staff. Rigorous evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has resulted in successful strategies that have tackled underachievement and accelerated pupils' progress so that it is good. However, whilst many of the oldest pupils have caught up well, overall standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 2 remain average.

Pupils really enjoy school. They are very polite to each other and to adults, and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils grow into mature young people in the school's stimulating atmosphere and their personal development is good. However, their understanding of the diversity of British culture is no more than satisfactory because they do not have enough opportunities to meet and work with their peers from backgrounds different to their own. Teaching is good. Lessons are lively and interesting and, as a result, pupils are keen to learn. Teachers plan especially challenging work in English and pupils make rapid progress in this subject. Progress in mathematics, while good, is not as quick because teachers do not provide the same high level of challenge in this subject as they do in English.

The good curriculum supports pupils' personal development well and provides a wealth of extra-curricular activities that widen pupils' horizons. Adults use their detailed knowledge of each pupil very well to provide an excellent standard of individual care. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very sympathetic support that enables them to make the same good progress as their peers. Care, guidance and support are good overall, rather than outstanding, because the academic feedback pupils are given is not always detailed enough to show them precisely how they can improve their work and make better progress.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are very pleased with its improvement under the current headteacher. One wrote, 'I am delighted with the school. Every day my boys come home smiling and talking enthusiastically about their learning.' Another said, 'Children are very happy in the school's friendly family atmosphere.' Other leaders provide the headteacher with good support by taking responsibility for standards in their areas. The record of improvements over the past three years shows the school's capacity to get even better is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception with skills and experiences at the expected level. They make good progress in the Reception class so that most reach above average standards when they start Year 1. Children's progress in mathematics is good but not as rapid as it is in literacy. This is because they do not have as many opportunities to practise their numerical skills in their chosen activities as they do their reading and writing skills. Children really enjoy school and make good progress in their personal development. They readily share learning resources and are keen to cooperate and help each other. Teaching is good. Lessons are lively and the stimulating activities that adults plan engage children well and accelerate their progress. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities and those children choose for themselves. Children have ready

access to the outdoor learning area and this is making a valuable contribution to their learning and in their gaining of independence. However, it is not as well equipped as the classroom to develop, for example, pupils' mathematics skills. The school has plans to extend this area and to provide additional resources.

Children's care is outstanding. They are very safe in both the classroom and outdoor learning area. Parents are very pleased with the quality of their child's education. They especially commented on the induction arrangements that mean children settle quickly and happily into the routines of school and the good feedback they receive on their child's progress. Early Years Foundation Stage leadership is good. The new leader has made many improvements. For example, training has sharpened adults' assessments skills, which is helping them to plan children's next steps more precisely.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the level of challenge in mathematics to enable pupils to make even better progress in this subject.
- Ensure the academic feedback given to pupils is consistently detailed enough to show them precisely how they can improve their work and make better progress.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to meet and work with their peers from backgrounds different to their own so that they have a good or better understanding of the diversity of British culture.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception with skills and experiences at the expected level. They make good progress in the Reception class so that most reach above average standards when they start Year 1. This good progress continues in Years 1 to 6 and pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. Although pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress in the past three years to catch up, work missed during the early years of their schooling means that standards are only average. Standards vary from year to year reflecting the higher or lower proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in each small cohort.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect very maturely on their feelings and those of others. Their outstanding behaviour is underpinned by a crystal clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils work very effectively in teams and are very keen to help and support each other. Pupils have a high level of respect for people from backgrounds different to their own but their appreciation of the variety of cultures within British society is a relative weakness.

Pupils understand precisely why they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and do their very best to eat a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because they know that the school deals promptly and effectively with the very rare incidences of bullying. They know how to keep themselves really safe, for example on the internet. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons, taking part in clubs and meeting their friends. Their above average attendance reflects their enthusiasm for school. Pupils are very keen to take responsibility as monitors and as members of the school council. They collect very generously

for charity. Pupils readily take part in local and church events. They have been proactive in setting up recycling points for the local community. Older pupils proudly talk about their mini enterprise activities and these, together with their good progress and positive attitudes, mean they are well prepared for secondary school and future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships in lessons are very positive. Teachers use resources such as computers well to engage pupils and extend their learning. Work is usually challenging and so stretches pupils. Work in English is particularly challenging, more so than it is in mathematics, and because of this pupils make best progress in reading and writing. Pupils learn particularly well when they discuss and clarify their ideas in groups. Progress sometimes slows when the teacher talks for too long. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Lively assemblies promote pupils' outstanding spiritual and moral development by providing excellent opportunities for pupils to think about their beliefs, their actions and those of others. A very wide range of sports and other clubs and visits to places such as museums raise pupils' aspirations and add to their enjoyment of school. Strategies to raise standards by improving pupils' use of vocabulary to express their ideas clearly in written work have been very successful. The school recognises the need to provide pupils with more opportunities to solve mathematical problems.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils with concerns confidently approach adults because they know their worry will be quickly and effectively resolved. The school provides especially good support for a small number of pupils who need a fresh start after their exclusion from other schools. The school's effective partnerships with other providers and agencies, such as behaviour experts, ensure staff have the appropriate skills to help these pupils settle quickly and become successful learners. Child protection procedures, health and safety arrangements and the checks on the suitability of adults to work in school are robust and regularly reviewed. The feedback teachers provide for pupils on how they can make their work and progress better does not always contain enough detail. This means that pupils are not always sure about what steps they need to take next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation by senior and subject leaders provides the school with a largely accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans are effective. For example, the quality of teaching has significantly improved over the past three

years. Occasionally, leaders do not make the best use of the data the school has to assess the success of their plans. The procedures to check each pupil's progress towards their challenging targets are robust. If their progress slows, they receive effective extra help so that they can catch up missed work. The school is strongly committed to equal opportunities and is a harmonious and happy society. It is working hard to help and support local people and is developing strong links with schools abroad. However, the school is not yet giving pupils a good insight into communities that are different to their own and community cohesion is satisfactory. The school uses staff to keep teaching groups small so that pupils get more individual help, which is contributing to their good progress. The governors work hard on behalf of the school and are not afraid to hold it to account over the standard of education it provides.

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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?	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?	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	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

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	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

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?	2

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	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**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lower Heath C of E Primary School, Whitchurch, SY13 2BT

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and having the opportunity to talk to some of you and to see you in lessons and at play. We especially liked the photography exhibition you have made. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. We think Lower Heath is a good school and it is continuing to improve. Here are some of the things we found out.

- You make a good start to school in the Reception class.
- Good teaching helps you make good progress in your lessons.
- In Year 6, standards are average.
- You really enjoy school and feel really safe and secure.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you attend very regularly.
- You have good relationships with your teachers and you work hard for them.
- The curriculum provides you with exciting clubs and many educational visits.
- Adults look after you well and are always ready to help you.
- The headteacher and adults are working hard to make sure the school gets better.

We have asked the school to do three things to help you do even better in your learning.

- Make sure teachers set work that really challenges you in mathematics so that you make even better progress in this subject.
- Ensure that you get detailed feedback from teachers about how you can improve your work and make even better progress.
- Provide you with more opportunities to meet and work with boys and girls from backgrounds different to your own so that you have a better understanding of the variety of cultures that make up British society.

You can help the school by continuing to behave so well, trying your best in lessons and attending very regularly.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Gerald Griffin

Lead inspector