

# Lower Meadow Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133484
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	328705
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Hicks

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	300
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	36
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Eric Holden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jan O'Connor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 November 2005
<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>	Batemoor Road Sheffield S8 8EE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 237 2700
<b>Fax number</b>	0114 237 8572

---

<b>Age group</b>	5–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	328705

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Lower Meadow Primary is a larger than average school with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. Situated to the south of Sheffield, it serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average and a growing number of pupils – approximately a third at present – are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of children with statements of special educational need is also well above average and rising. These include pupils from the integrated unit for children with profound hearing loss. The unit works very closely with the school, supporting the only inclusive, signing school environment in the area. A below average but growing percentage of pupils who come from mainly African or Asian heritages are at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained Activemark accreditation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Lower Meadow is a satisfactory school, which is rapidly improving as a result of strong leadership and management. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is outstanding and there are considerable strengths in pupils' personal development and well-being as a result of the good care, guidance and support they receive. Parents confirm that their children love coming to school. 'Marvellous, thumbs up!' sums up the views of many.

The headteacher's vision and drive for school improvement is shared by her leadership team. This has resulted in significant improvements in teaching and learning. Good systems to support pupils' next steps are now in place. These are shared by all staff, who are now using these systems effectively to improve their pupils' learning experiences and life chances. While these improvements have not yet been embedded fully or, as yet, had a major impact on standards, evidence shows that strategies put in place to raise achievement are proving successful as standards are beginning to rise.

Children get off to a flying start in their school life and flourish as a result of the outstanding provision in EYFS, with a wealth of learning opportunities both inside and outside. As a result pupils are now entering Year 1 with below rather than well below expected skills. This has yet to have an impact on results at the end of Year 2. Results in national tests indicate standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are generally well below average. This indicates satisfactory achievement overall considering pupils' significantly low starting points. Achievement in science is strongest and the school's most recent data show these pupils reached below rather than well below average results in 2008.

Standards of the present Year 6 are below rather than well below average, reflecting the school's drive for improvement particularly in English. Pupils' performance in mathematics is less strong, because of weaknesses in the mathematics curriculum, some inaccuracies in the way the subject is taught and insufficiently high expectations in some year groups of what the average and more able pupils should achieve. The school is at an early stage of addressing these weaknesses, but evidence indicates marked improvements in the rate of progress for many older pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with profound hearing loss, make good progress because they are given good levels of support and the work is individually matched to their needs.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is not consistently effective across the school. In the best lessons, teachers engage pupils in a range of stimulating activities which capture their interest and fully involve them in their learning. However, in some lessons, work lacks challenge because it is not well enough matched to the abilities of many pupils and teachers spend too much time talking rather than allowing pupils to discuss and learn together. As a result, progress is less pronounced. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enhanced by a range of activities and visits, and theme weeks such as 'celebrating differences week' promote community cohesion well. Enrichment afternoons excite pupils' learning and encourage them to explore new areas of experience. The school has identified that the mathematics curriculum needs addressing to ensure all pupils have the necessary skills to prepare them well for their life after Lower Meadow. The curriculum for children leaving EYFS and entering Year 1 is too formal at times, with too few opportunities for children to explore, play and develop together.

High quality care and support from a caring, dedicated staff have resulted in pupils who feel very safe at school, enjoy their learning and get on well with each other. As pupils say, they go

to a school where 'everyone is good friends'. Those learning English as an additional language get good support and achieve as well as others. Those with hearing loss are fully included in this exceptional signing environment and many pupils with hearing are learning to sign, enhancing their own communication skills. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes as a result of the nurturing environment and the clear and effective systems put in place to support them. They clearly understand right from wrong and are proud of their card system, which helps all pupils to behave well. Academic guidance is satisfactory and appropriate action has been taken to ensure that target setting is becoming more effective in enabling an increasing number of pupils to make good progress. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe, as the school strongly promotes this through personal and social activities, which are fully embedded in the curriculum. Pupils enjoy school, although this is not fully reflected in their attendance. However, recent evidence shows that this is rising as a result of the school's hard work and relentless efforts. Pupils readily take on responsibilities, such as school council members or recycling warriors and are developing the skills needed for their next steps of learning.

Although the school has faced many challenges, strong leadership supported by good governance has led to improvements in standards at the end of Year 6 with a larger proportion meeting or exceeding expected levels. The school is now meeting more challenging targets as a result. This shows good capacity to improve. The school knows itself well, and the leadership team along with the phase leaders work closely together to set the right priorities. Together they have a clear drive and shared momentum to improve. The high priority placed on including all ensures all pupils are treated equally and diversity is celebrated in this very inclusive school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement is outstanding. From very low starting points children make rapid gains to reach overall standards that are below the expected levels at the end of Reception. A sizeable proportion reach the level expected of their age. The large number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or hearing loss make similarly outstanding progress. This is because of outstanding provision. Children largely direct their own learning. They quickly settle in and take full advantage of the high quality learning experiences inside and outside. Parents value this provision highly and say their children are happy and settled from the outset. Adults support children's learning exceptionally well and the key worker system is highly effective. Children have lots of opportunities for adventurous play and to learn through investigation and exploration. As a result they are happy, active, curious learners, who concentrate for increasing lengths of time. They are looked after extremely well and blossom because of the close attention paid to their safety and their individual needs. Leadership and management are outstanding as are teaching and learning. Assessment is a major strength for it is based on close observation of what children know and can do, which is then used to plan the next steps in their individual learning. As a result children's personal, social and emotional development and their communication and language skills develop apace. From limited communication skills on entry, children develop into confident, sociable young people extremely well prepared for the next stage.

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

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure greater consistency in teaching so all pupils make good progress.

- Develop transition from EYFS to Year 1 to ensure that the curriculum meets all learners' needs.

A small proportion of 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**

Results in national tests, including provisional results in 2008, indicate standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are generally well below average. This indicates satisfactory achievement from pupils' significantly low starting points. Children enter Year 1 with levels generally well below those expected for children of their age. An increasing proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there is a significant number who have more complex needs, including those with profound hearing loss. Despite this, evidence shows that pupils entering Year 1 in 2008 reached levels below rather than well below expected levels as a result of the outstanding provision in EYFS. In addition more pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to reach or exceed expected levels as a result of whole-school strategies to support literacy skills and the high quality teaching they receive. Progress is more uneven in Key Stage 2. Older pupils make better progress, particularly in Year 6. However inconsistencies in teaching and learning and the weakness in the mathematics curriculum is slowing progress for some pupils to a satisfactory pace. Improvements, although resulting in better achievement, have not had time to impact fully on improving standards at the end of Year 6. Pupils learning English as an additional language get good support to enable them to make similar progress to others. The many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with hearing loss make good progress as a result of effective support and a personalised approach to meeting their needs.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles through a good range of physical activities both in and out of school. 'Brain gym' is a particular favourite and pupils say it helps them to 'settle and learn better'. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect and clearly understand their rights and their responsibilities. They are proud of their school, where differences are celebrated and feel strongly that they are listened to and can make a difference. As the school council says, 'Kids have a say in what goes on here.' They clearly appreciate and value this inclusive school. Children are polite, behave well and enjoy school as reflected in their positive attitudes to learning. Attendance, although broadly average, is not as high as it could be and recent improvements reflect the hard work taken to raise this. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to their school community with older pupils, for example, thoroughly enjoying helping younger children at playtimes. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills, which support their future education and later lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, expectations high and teachers plan activities which fully involve pupils in their learning, challenging them appropriately. In these lessons pupils are crystal clear about what to do to improve their work. Outstanding practice was seen but there are inconsistencies across the school in the quality of teaching and learning, and this results in uneven progress for pupils, particularly in their mathematical skills. In some lessons opportunities are lost to extend pupils' learning through effective questioning and discussion. As a result pupils are too passive and progress is slow. In these lessons activities lack excitement and are not always matched appropriately to all pupils' needs. Marking of work is inconsistent. Although it usually celebrates effort and achievement, it does not always specify clearly enough the next steps in learning. Pupils behave well as a result of clear and effective routines, and consistently good relationships across the school between adults and pupils underpin their positive attitudes to learning. Teamwork is a strength, with teachers working closely and very effectively with support staff to ensure good progress for those learning English as an additional language and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or hearing loss.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are areas of weakness in mathematics and also in the transition from EYFS to Year 1, but also some real strengths. These are the enrichment opportunities supporting new and enjoyable learning experiences. The school is also particularly good at promoting pupils' social development. The introduction of a programme that helps children to make links between sounds and letters and also another to support learning through discussion are among a number of strategies helping to accelerate achievement in literacy skills. The curriculum in mathematics is not, as yet, as effective in ensuring all pupils develop the skills they need for the future. The staff are developing a more creative approach to planning activities which excite pupils' learning and recognise the need to link subjects together to make the curriculum more relevant and meaningful for pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The staff provide a good level of care, guidance and support for pupils, successfully promoting their physical health and emotional well-being. This is firmly reflected in the inclusive, caring ethos and the nurturing environment evident throughout the school. Pupils talk proudly of their school and say, 'they wouldn't change a thing'. Child protection procedures are in place and arrangements for health and safety are robust. The school is working hard to involve parents, who agree that their children are well cared for and safe. Effective partnerships with a range of providers and the support of a strong inclusion team, including those who support pupils with profound hearing loss, ensure those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or hearing loss make good progress. Pupils' progress is now carefully monitored and tracked by teachers each term and an increasing number of pupils are making good progress, particularly in English and science. Academic support given to pupils is variable. For example, the quality of marking is inconsistent. At its best pupils are very clear about their next steps and are able

to make rapid progress as a result. The high standard of care and support is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of well-being. As one pupil said, 'If you need something, someone always helps you.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The skilful leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team and the phase leaders, is driving school improvement. Leaders have been made accountable and they have relished the extra responsibility and challenge. Strategies to raise achievement have been successful as reflected in the many more pupils now making good progress, although this has yet to impact significantly on standards. The quality of teaching and learning has improved through effective systems of coaching and teachers are now benefiting from an improved understanding of standards and pupils' progress. This is as a result of a rigorous focus on compiling and using data effectively to support pupils' learning. This reflects a good capacity to improve further. Challenging targets are being set and this is central to accelerating pupils' progress. Leaders, including governors, understand their school's strengths and areas for development well and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are in place. Governance is strong, benefiting from a knowledgeable and skilled team who ask challenging questions and support the school in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. Financial management is good. Community cohesion is promoted well, fully embracing the wide range of ethnicity in the local community and beyond. The high priority placed on inclusion reflects leaders' deep commitment to ensuring all pupils in the school are treated equally and given every opportunity to flourish at Lower Meadow.



**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

### 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	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<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>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## 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?	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**

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us during your school's recent inspection. You behave so well and really look after each other well in your caring school. How lovely to see you helping each other and behaving so well in lessons too. We were really pleased to hear that so many of you love coming to school and enjoy your learning so much. We enjoyed talking with you all and I am writing on behalf of my team to let you know the judgements we reached about your school during our time with you all.

Firstly, and most importantly, we would like you to know that you go to a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. This means that there are some things that your school does really well and other things it needs to do better. It is improving quickly, because your headteacher is working very hard with all the staff and governors to help all of you make good progress. We have asked your headteacher and the staff to work especially hard at helping you to get better at mathematics. This will help you a lot when you move on to your next school.

We were very impressed at how well the younger children play and learn happily together. What lovely activities you have inside and outside! It is hard to move up the school, especially from Reception to Year 1, so we have asked your teachers to make this easier for you by giving you more opportunities to play, explore and learn together in Year 1.

The last thing we have asked your teachers to do is make sure all of you have good lessons, so you can all learn well. You can help your teachers by working hard and behaving well.

Thank you all once again for being so kind and helpful and for working so hard in lessons. I am sure you will continue to enjoy your learning.