

Lark Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106056
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	336609
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Richard Coaton
Headteacher	Mrs Hazel Williams
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, involving seven teachers and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school assessments, School Improvement Partner reports, planning and policies, and examined 32 questionnaires from parents and carers and questionnaires completed by pupils.

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

- how well provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to progress in their learning and development
- whether the quality of teaching, including the use of assessment information, enables all pupils, including the vulnerable and more able, to do as well as they can
- the impact on pupils' learning and well-being of the school's perceived strengths in care, guidance and support
- how effectively governors are involved in the school's monitoring and evaluating to identify and remedy areas for improvement.

Information about the school

This smaller than average sized school serves an urban community close to the centre of Stockport. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school serves pupils from a range of ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for in the Reception class. The school has gained the Healthy Schools, Activemark and International School awards.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support to pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable and face considerable barriers to their learning. There is a welcoming ethos where all are valued as individuals by the dedicated headteacher and her staff. These features have a significant impact on the personal development of the pupils, particularly in their maturity and consideration for others. All pupils are supported effectively through a good, well-planned curriculum.

Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the way pupils are involved in setting learning targets and the involvement of middle leaders in the school's self-evaluation. This track record of improvement illustrates well the ambition and drive that the senior leadership team provide. Through well-informed self-evaluation the school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and plans carefully to address these issues. Governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work so that they can play their part in securing good outcomes for pupils. There is a strong commitment to staff development and the involvement of all staff in determining priorities. This illustrates well the good capacity that the school has to improve further.

Pupils achieve well, taking into account their starting points; most enter the school with a level of skills below those typically expected for their age. Outcomes, at the end of Year 6 show an improving trend and are currently in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make the best progress in Key Stage 2 where the teaching is consistently good. More able children in Key Stage 1 do not progress as well as they might because their work does not always challenge them, especially in reading and writing. A priority of the school is to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils, and to develop in them a life-long interest in learning and achievement, and it does these things well.

The quality of teaching is good. In some respects, such as in the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils, and in the care with which teachers assess the work of pupils and engage them in the process, it is very strong. Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their attitude to work. In the Reception class, the quality of teaching is good and children make a good start to their learning. The outcomes of assessment are used effectively to challenge children's learning and there is a good balance between learning activities led by adults and those offering children opportunities to choose.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of more able pupils in Key Stage 1, especially in reading

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and writing, by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils' can achieve
- giving pupils more opportunities to use their thinking skills
- making tasks more relevant to their interests and learning needs.
- Engage more governors in the school's monitoring and evaluating process by:
 - ensuring they play a part in measuring the impact of any planned improvements
 - ensuring that they understand how they can effectively improve outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In the best lessons there is real enthusiasm and pupils display a good range of learning skills. They are always ready to learn and display good attitudes by showing that they can work together effectively, take initiative and respond well to challenges. More-able younger pupils are more passive learners where teaching is less challenging. Factors contributing to the good development of the whole child are the average standards attained, from low starting points, and the overall good progress in learning as seen in pupils' work. Attainment levels have been sustained since the previous inspection with a slight rising trend in outcomes. Progress is best at Key Stage 2 because pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work and to consider how it can be improved. The quality of learning and progress are good overall. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high quality support from teaching assistants both in and out of the classroom. As a result, they make good progress not only in literacy and numeracy but also in the skills for learning and life.

Behaviour is good and, because of the school's determined approach, attendance is average. Pupils are caring and demonstrate a mature understanding of the needs and feelings of their peers; as seen, for example in their involvement in the children's council, as 'buddies' helping younger children, the eco council and charitable fund-raising for a wide range of organisations. They relish these opportunities for responsibility and are keen to work with others in school and in their local community. Most impressive is the willingness of pupils, regardless of whether they hold these roles or not, to act upon the advice and decisions of their peers. The children's council meets regularly, involves large numbers of pupils and holds an important role in involving all in the life of the school; encouraging their suggestions for improvement. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of what contributes to a healthy lifestyle. They thoroughly enjoy participating in a wide range of activities, including music, drama, sport and community projects. Through such activities they are well known and respected in the community. The many good attributes pupils demonstrate in their personal development show they are well equipped to move on to the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources to stimulate learning well. At its most effective, teaching has pace and provides opportunities for pupils to discuss and to work together. This motivates pupils to learn. In these lessons, teachers use assessment information well to challenge all pupils and to pick up any misconceptions and resolve them quickly. Throughout the school, teachers use interactive whiteboard technology well to demonstrate teaching points and to make learning clear to pupils. Sometimes, teachers underestimate the capabilities of more-able younger pupils. Tasks are not always appropriate to their learning needs and pupils are given too few opportunities to think for themselves.

The curriculum is good and focuses well on the development of basic skills, particularly literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. The effective teaching of French provides pupils with enjoyable opportunities to learn a modern foreign language. Other subjects are promoted well through visits and visitors, for example, the involvement of Year 6 pupils with the Philharmonic Orchestra. The curriculum is monitored well at different levels throughout the school with areas for

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

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development clearly recognised through ongoing curriculum reviews. Pupils' personal development is promoted through the effective teaching of social and emotional aspects of learning, and through the positive ethos of the school. Extra-curricular activities, including some led by pupils, enhance the main curriculum with a good range of well-attended activities. The needs of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding with a very positive effect on pupils' personal development. Close monitoring of progress and well-being ensures all pupils are supported to a very high standard. Pupils facing barriers to their learning are extremely well supported, for example, through the excellent work of the learning mentor in helping pupils to overcome emotional issues. Relationships observed during the inspection were respectful and very positive. Links with services to support vulnerable pupils are excellent. Transition arrangements between all key stages are effective, and pupils are provided with high quality guidance and support to prepare them for the next stages in their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Ambition and the drive for improvement are persistent, guided by a clear vision and shared by the staff and pupils. The work of the school is constantly reviewed by the headteacher and leadership team. Lessons are observed, assessments are carefully analysed, and information is gathered from parents and carers, and pupils, to identify strengths and weaknesses. School priorities are identified and challenging targets set and pursued by subject leaders. This has sustained average standards and good progress. The impact is evident in stronger teaching and more effective learning in lessons, despite some inconsistencies in the challenge for more-able younger pupils. Governors provide good support and satisfactory challenge. While they are aware of the school's areas for development, few are involved in strategic planning. They are too reliant on the headteacher to guide their analysis and measure the impact of improvements on pupils' learning outcomes.

The school's good partnerships with parents and carers, and outside agencies ensure that pupils' well-being is promoted strongly. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place. The school pursues a robust equality policy, challenges stereotyping, ensures that there is no discrimination and adjusts teaching and the curriculum to meet the needs of

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pupils from different ethnic groups. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. There are good and effective links with schools nationally and globally and local links are especially effective. Currently, pupils are working well with representatives of the local community to improve a derelict piece of land adjacent to the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children get off to a good start. They enter the Reception class often with skills below those expected for their age and, sometimes, well below. While good teaching ensures that they make good progress in their learning, they enter Year 1 with below average skills but with good attitudes to learning. The curriculum is effective in providing children with a stimulating range of activities, with direct access to outdoor facilities of good quality, ensuring good opportunities for children to take physical exercise and to explore the world around them. Daily sessions focus appropriately upon letters and sounds and opportunities for writing but because of particularly low starting points, progress in communication, language and literacy is not as brisk as that in other areas of learning. Resources are used well to capture children's interest and excitement, for example, the opportunity to add words to a speech bubble related to a character in their Kenyan story, helped to enliven their learning. They enjoy dressing as imaginative characters and using the computer to solve puzzles. The Early Years Foundation Stage is successful in making sure that children develop in confidence and learn to work in cooperation with others. Children are well cared for. Their progress is monitored regularly and accurately.

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Parents and carers are kept regularly informed of their children's progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and, where necessary, outside agencies are used effectively to provide support.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers are happy with all aspects of the school's work and its effectiveness. All agreed that the school keeps children safe. Very few felt that children are not helped to have a healthy lifestyle or are prepared well for their future.

Inspectors find that the school helps children well, to have a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are prepared well for their future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lark Hill Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	68	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	45	12	55	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	50	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	59	8	36	1	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	64	6	27	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	55	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	36	13	59	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	73	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	64	7	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	68	7	32	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lark Hill Primary School, Stockport, SK3 9PH

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school for its recent inspection. We appreciated your politeness and enjoyed talking with you. We were impressed by your pride in your school and the way you talk so enthusiastically about it. Your behaviour and understanding of how to stay safe are good. You make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. We know that you are proud of the work you are doing to improve the field next to school. In addition to these positive attributes, you also make good progress in your learning reaching expected standards by Year 6.

Your school is led and managed well. All adults play their part in the smooth running of the school and wanting the best for you. Your headteacher, the teachers and teaching assistants give good help and support, and keep a close eye on how well the school is doing. Through the hard work of the adults, the school provides you with outstanding levels of support, guidance and care, and good teaching. The subjects you learn are interesting, too, and it is good to hear about your involvement in your children's council and the fund-raising for so many good causes. We were delighted to see your display of decorated eggs for Easter.

So what does the school need to do to get even better? We have asked your leaders to build on the school's existing strengths to offer more challenging activities for the younger pupils who find learning easier, to help them do as well as they can, especially in reading and writing. We have also asked them to encourage more of the governors to be involved in checking that the school is doing as well as it can and that the outcomes for you are as good as they can be.

You attend a good school providing you with outstanding care, guidance and support. Our congratulations and good wishes for the future!

Yours sincerely

Michael Onyon

Lead inspector

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