

# Lowton St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106486
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	336680
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Halford

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs E Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Newton Road Lowton Warrington WA3 1EW
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and all teachers were observed. The inspectors held meetings with the governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and personnel from external agencies working in partnership with the school. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, improvement planning, a range of school documentation, national published assessment data and the school's own data. Inspectors spent approximately 45% of their time looking at learning and also analysed 124 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as a number of questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

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

- pupils' standards in basic skills to check if they are high enough
- the current quality of teaching and the impact it has on improving pupils' learning
- the extent of the school's improvement since the last inspection and how this reflects on its capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

Lowton St Mary's is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds with a very small proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. A well below average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A below average proportion of pupils are identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A below average number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Major changes have taken place in the senior leadership of the school from the start of the current school year. The school offers before- and after-school and holiday care, but this facility is subject to a separate inspection. The school holds Healthy School Status, is an Investor in People and has been awarded the Eco Schools Gold Flag.

**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 and improving school, which has made considerable progress since the last inspection in raising pupils' achievement. Central to its success is the outstanding level of care it extends to its pupils. The school knows itself well and identifies areas for development. Well-planned staff training aid improvement effectively. Actions identified in the school improvement plan are linked clearly to their intended impact on pupils' academic achievement, personal development and well-being. This demonstrates well the good capacity that the school has to improve further. It enjoys the overwhelming support of parents, summed up succinctly by one parent who commented: 'This is an excellent school; I would recommend it to anyone'.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a thoroughly good start. This is because excellent quality provision and outstanding leadership and management of the setting enable them to learn well in a happy, safe and stimulating learning environment. In Key Stages 1 and 2, good quality teaching ensures that pupils' rate of learning and progress is good. As a result, the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 are just above average. Pupils achieve well because rigorous tracking enables staff to identify pupils whose progress slows and to respond effectively with good individual support. Pupils' current work and the school's own data show that rates of progress are good across the school, including that for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable. Too little challenge is offered to the more-able pupils in numeracy and literacy. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils, especially boys, to extend their writing skills in all the subjects they study.

The curriculum is enriched with good features such as opportunities for pupils to take part in sport and music. The focus the school gives to promoting pupils' personal development and well-being is good. It is highly effective in the promotion of their understanding of healthy lifestyles and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which are particularly strong. Examples of detailed marking, indicating clearly to pupils what they need to do next to improve their work, are evident but not consistently so throughout the school.

The leadership and management of the school is good. New appointments made to the senior management of the school at the start of the current school year are having a positive impact. Governors are knowledgeable and well placed to oversee further improvement. Good development in the promotion of community cohesion, equal opportunities and improvements in the school's engagement with parents, since the last inspection, are examples of this. The school is providing good value for money.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' standards in numeracy and literacy by:
  - providing a more consistent challenge to the more-able pupils
  - offering all pupils, especially boys, more opportunities to write at length across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning by ensuring consistency in teachers' marking across the school so that pupils know what they should do next to improve their work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard in lessons. They maintain good levels of concentration and listen well to their teachers and other pupils. They make good progress to reach standards just above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Good transition arrangements from the Reception Year to Year 1 ensure pupils continue to learn through play, and progress well in Key Stage 1. This good progress accelerates through Key Stage 2 and is leading to steadily rising standards. Although standards have risen consistently since the last inspection, outcomes in writing are not as high as in reading. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities within the other subjects they study to extend their writing skills. This is especially so for boys. In addition too little attention is given to the learning needs of more able pupils to ensure they are challenged consistently in the tasks set for them.

Pupils enjoy school and achieve well. Their attendance is good. Behaviour is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are considerate and helpful and display a good level of maturity. They feel safe in school. They say: 'We know that teachers will always help us if there is a problem'. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and they value the wide range of sporting and exercise opportunities available to them. The school council is effective and helps to support the good links with the local community. The good progress pupils make in basic skills, as well as the roles and responsibilities they have in school, prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. The school takes every opportunity to celebrate pupils' personal achievements. They show real respect for the needs and interests of others and recognise very clearly the difference between right and wrong. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is developing well. While they have only limited experiences of working and playing alongside children whose culture differs from their own, the school is working positively to develop this area of its work.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan activities which make learning enjoyable and purposeful, and often challenge pupils through skilful questioning to explain and justify their answers. Engaging work, such as with older pupils on time zones, and good quality writing was seen based on well-chosen texts such as 'The Long Walk'. In many lessons, pupils work in pairs and groups to help each other with their work and to discuss how this could be even better. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable receive good support and, as a consequence, make good progress. Teachers recognise that learning could be even better and are determined to further develop strategies to make good lessons become outstanding lessons. Marking and feedback are helpful, and in many classes detailed and developmental. However, occasionally pupils do not receive enough guidance on how to improve their work further.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement. It is broad and balanced and is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with different levels of ability through good provision for literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. Pupils' enjoyment is enhanced well by the curriculum. They have a wide variety of performance opportunities, visits, visitors and residential trips. However, pupils have fewer opportunities to practise and extend their writing skills across all subjects of the curriculum.

<sup>1</sup> 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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Staff know the pupils outstandingly well and this is seen in the high levels of confidence pupils and their parents and carers have in the levels of care provided. Links with parents was an area for improvement at the last inspection and the results of the parents' and carers' questionnaire show that this issue has been followed up well. Effective links with a wide range of outside agencies provide well-targeted support for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Such support helps pupils to make the best of the opportunities that the school provides.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The senior leadership team has been established from the start of the current school year. Its aim, continually to improve provision and outcomes for pupils, is fully shared by all members of staff. As a consequence, standards are improving and the school community has a real sense of purpose and confidence. Leaders monitor and evaluate performance closely and they implement actions to secure improvement with energy and determination. All pupils are given an equal opportunity to learn and to feel secure. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully: teaching is now good overall and all groups of pupils make good progress in their learning. The school uses its budget and other resources efficiently.

Partnerships are good. Almost all parents and carers say how pleased they are with the school and how welcome they are made to feel. The school works hard and continues to develop ways to engage parents so that they feel that they have an active role to play in their children's education. The school has made a good start to promoting community cohesion. As a result, pupils' involvement in the local community is good, and this is beginning to be extended to widen their experiences of national and global communities.

Child protection procedures and safeguarding guidelines are fully in place and to meet national requirements. Expertise on the governing body effectively supports this work. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's work and are rigorous in holding it to account. They are in school frequently and are active supporters of its work.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. It is led and managed particularly well and staff work together as an extremely effective team. When children begin the Nursery Year, a significant number demonstrate skills which are below those expected for their age, especially in their language and social development. All children make good progress towards the early learning goals and, when they move to Year 1, almost all children achieve average standards or better in all the areas of learning. The quality of adult support for learning is very strong. Excellently-planned indoor and outdoor learning environments develop children's speaking, listening and social skills particularly well. Real fun was had by children stirring the porridge in the story of Goldilocks and high levels of excitement generated as Goldilocks emerged from the bag in which she was hiding! Outside provision is varied, challenging and of high quality. It is very well equipped to ensure that activities undertaken inside can be followed up effectively outside. There are very strong links with parents and carers who have a wide range of opportunities to share in the children's experience. Staff pay a high level of attention to ensuring children are safe and all welfare requirements are met fully. Staff use assessments very well to plan activities and build effectively on prior learning.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned was high. Almost all of the parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire were content with and fully supportive of the quality of education and care provided at the school. Comments include: 'I am happy with the school and my child is doing well; they offer a varied curriculum and lots of good experiences' and 'They learn to care about each other, the community and the wider world'. A small number of parents expressed negative views, some of which were articulated at length. These were mainly about cover for staff absences, communication with parents and the management of pupils' behaviour. These last two points were 'areas for improvement' following the last inspection and the inspectors judge that positive progress has been made in both these areas. Taking into account the high number of returns received and the positive nature of the overwhelming majority, the inspectors found no reason to disagree with that majority.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lowton St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Aided) 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 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	71	33	27	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	59	50	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	48	58	47	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	45	57	46	9	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	43	65	52	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	44	59	48	10	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	48	63	51	2	2	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)	54	44	56	45	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	47	56	45	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	44	48	39	14	11	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	41	61	49	9	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	54	44	54	44	6	5	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	71	57	44	35	5	4	1	1

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



3 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowton St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School, Warrington, WA3 1EW

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our recent inspection of your school. Thank you very much for your warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around the school. My particular thanks should go to everyone who spoke with us and who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much.

Lowton St Mary CE Primary School is a good school, with some very interesting work taking place. The staff care for you all outstandingly well and make sure you feel healthy, safe and secure. We also think that the provision made in the new Early Years Foundation Stage area is excellent. I shall remember all the activities in the Hall before the start of each day, and Mrs Baker's skill at 'Ten Pin Bowling!'

When we visit schools, inspectors also look for things which will help each school to get even better. We think your standards in literacy and numeracy can be helped to improve if you have more opportunities to write across a range of other subjects – especially the boys. We have also asked your teachers to make sure they challenge those boys and girls who find work easy to do, so that they really have to think about their work. And we have asked your teachers to explain to you more often and in more of your subjects how you can improve, for example when they mark your work. I have asked your headteacher to make these important improvements.

Thank you once again for all your help when we made our visit to you. I send you all my very best wishes for the future. I do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Halford

Lead Inspector

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