

Leedon Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109509
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337306
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Kilduff
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty one lessons or part lessons were observed and 10 teachers were seen. The inspection team observed the school's work and examined its policies, assessments, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. There were informal conversations with parents. The inspectors analysed 140 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and others by staff and pupils.

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

- strategies to improve pupils' performance in mathematics
- how well the more-able pupils are challenged and extended
- the impact of the thematic curriculum on pupils' enjoyment and learning
- to what extent all leaders are evaluating and improving performance.

Information about the school

Leedon Lower is a larger-than-average lower school. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The nature of these difficulties lies mainly in the areas of emotional, speech, language and communication. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Reception. An onsite pre-school is run by a private company and this is inspected separately. A breakfast and after-school club is managed by the school and governing body and was part of the inspection.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Leedon Lower School provides a satisfactory education. There are some good features to its work. Good care, guidance and support and a positive school atmosphere contribute well to pupils' personal development. Pupils learn and play well together and their attendance is above average. Most pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and show a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Community cohesion is promoted well and pupils make valuable contributions to the school and to the local community.

Most year groups enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills broadly expected for their age. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because of the interesting activities provided. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through Key Stage 1 and 2 and attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 4. There are examples of good teaching but this practice is not consistent through Years 1 to 4. Most teachers build good relationships with their classes. In the best lessons pupils are challenged well and learning maintains a good pace. In others, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly the more able. Pupils' have too few opportunities to plan and organise their own work. The pace of learning can decline when teachers talk for too long in their introductions. An interesting curriculum has been developed which is enriched by a good range of additional activities. Positive steps have been taken to improve provision in writing and mathematics and these are beginning to improve pupils' performance. Interesting topics are contributing to pupils' improvements in writing.

The headteacher, key leaders and staff are successfully promoting good care and personal outcomes for pupils. Effective partnerships have been established with parents and carers, who are pleased with the education and support provided. School self-evaluation is broadly accurate and leaders have been successful in securing improvements to pupils' writing and to the curriculum. This demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. However, the monitoring and development of teaching receive insufficient attention. Some key leaders are new to their posts and are not fully involved in monitoring processes. Although there has been improvement in some areas, inconsistencies in teaching are preventing pupils from reaching their full potential.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by the end of Year 4 from average to above average by improving the consistency and quality of teaching.

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- Improve teaching and pupils' progress from satisfactory to good by:
 - using assessment more effectively to match tasks to pupils' needs, particularly the more able.
 - ensuring that learning and the lesson proceed at a brisk pace
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to plan and organise their own work.
- Improve the rigour and impact of evaluation of the school's performance by key leaders, particularly the monitoring and development of teaching.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school and are achieving satisfactorily. Assessment information, pupils' work and the lessons seen indicate that most pupils make satisfactory progress including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment is broadly in line with the expectations for pupils' ages by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Below average proportions of pupils attain the higher-than-expected levels as not enough attention is given to extending the more able. Differences in boys' and girls' performance are similar to the national picture. Improving pupils' performance in writing is a priority and clear progress has been made here, particularly in motivating boys. Topics such as 'Dragons and Demons', 'Robots' and 'World Cup Football' have inspired boys to write. Shortly before the inspection pupils in Year 4 wrote interesting articles about the finding of the Jules Rimet World Cup trophy. Their writing was well structured into paragraphs and they used word processing effectively to draft, edit their writing and to enhance presentation. This good work is not consistent across the school and pupils do not always receive sufficient guidance and structure by teachers to help them develop good writing skills.

Pupils make sound progress in mathematics. Practical problem-solving activities have been increased to improve pupils' performance but activities are not always successful in challenging the most able. In a Year 3 science lesson, pupils gained a good knowledge of the function of the human skeleton by identifying the main bones and joints of the human body using articulated models. In Year 4, pupils applied measuring and recording skills well as they investigated the length of different pupils' bones. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to plan and design their own investigation and methods of recording.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration for others and ability to learn and play together. Pupils feel well cared for at school and are confident that there is always a trusted adult they can turn to if they are worried or upset. Pupils take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council. They participate in a range of local community events such as carol singing at the local church and raising funds for different charities. Pupils are reasonably well prepared for the future and their economic well-being. Their personal and social

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skills are well developed and their literacy and numeracy skills are developing satisfactorily.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and create a positive classroom climate for pupils to learn. The purpose of the lesson is made clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and informative. Questioning is usually used well to check pupils' understanding. Assessment information is not used consistently well to plan teaching. In a number of lessons seen, all pupils tackled the same task regardless of their ability. When this happens, learning is not always challenging enough, particularly for the more-able pupils. Learning can also decline when pupils are sitting and listening to the teacher for too long when they are eager and ready to move on to the main task. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well to support learning, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs.

The school has worked hard to develop an exciting curriculum which enhances

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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enjoyment and motivates pupils. Positive steps have been taken to improve provision in English and mathematics. There are interesting and meaningful links between subjects through themes such as, 'They Think It's All Over', a project about the World Cup football competition. Health education and additional sporting activities make a useful contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyles. The teaching of French contributes well to pupils' language and cultural development. A parent commented, 'I'm pleased with extra activities such as sports, trips and the animals.' A well run on-site farm with a pony, goats, pigs and chickens is an interesting and unique feature. Clubs, visits and visitors further enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Good care, support and guidance underpin the school's ethos. Relationships between adults and pupils are a clear strength in the school. A parent summed up the views of many, 'I am pleased with the pastoral care and the concern for the welfare of my child. The school values every child and works hard to engender good morals.' Procedures to promote good attendance and good behaviour are working well. The Sunbeams nurture group successfully supports children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It makes a good contribution to their personal and social development. Parents remarked, 'The Sunbeams unit has really helped my child, its brilliant' and 'The Sunbeams programme has been very beneficial to my child'. Working parents appreciate the well managed breakfast and after-school clubs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are effectively ensuring good care and promoting good personal outcomes for pupils. The school is well regarded by the vast majority of parents and carers.

Although school performance is monitored and reviewed satisfactorily, senior staff do not always compare performance with the national data. As a result, some aspects of performance, such as pupils' progress and attendance, are judged to be higher than they really are. Leaders and managers have been successful in improving the curriculum. However, strategies used by key staff to monitor and develop teaching are not sufficiently focused to lead to consistently good teaching across Key Stage 1 and 2. Governors are supportive and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and development points. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and is becoming more focused on raising pupils' attainment and progress. Its role in holding the school to

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account is less effective. There are satisfactory procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. There are some minor omissions with recording procedures which the school is addressing.

Equality is promoted satisfactorily and discrimination is tackled effectively. Leaders are aware that there is more to do before all groups of pupils make consistently good progress. Community cohesion is promoted well through the school's positive links with the local community, including with the church and partner schools. Different cultures and faiths are promoted through the curriculum and there are plans to extend opportunities to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of global communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective leadership and management are promoting good provision and positive outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Successful induction arrangements and effective partnerships with parents, carers and preschool settings help children to settle quickly. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the positive relationships between adults and children, and the good attention to care and welfare. Children feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. Behaviour and relationships are consistently good.

Assessment information is used well to plan teaching and learning. An interesting range of learning activities is provided. Children thoroughly enjoy learning and make good progress. Children are well taught and there is an effective blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. They have good opportunities to explore, be creative

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and work independently. Adults successfully integrate language development into all activities so children make good progress in this area. Outdoor learning activities are usually well planned but they are less purposeful when they are not linked to the main topic.

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

The inspection team received a good response to the survey with about half of parents and carers returning the questionnaire. Almost all parents and carers who returned them are happy with their children's experience at the school. They are particularly pleased with safety in school and the sense of enjoyment. The inspection team agrees with these positive views. A very small minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the school takes sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. Furthermore, a few parents do not believe that their children are making enough progress and that school is not effective enough in informing them about their child's progress. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress rather than good and this is because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The school has appropriate procedures for reporting pupils' progress to parents. The senior staff and governors are keen to respond to parents' suggestions and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Leedon Lower 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 140 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 287 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	99	71	37	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	93	66	44	31	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	44	68	49	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	50	61	44	8	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	80	57	54	39	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	49	66	47	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	72	51	66	47	2	1	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)	59	42	59	42	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	46	67	48	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	33	82	59	5	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	41	66	47	11	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	82	59	53	38	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	92	66	46	33	2	1	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



11 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leedon Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3LZ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. Yours is a satisfactory school. There are some good features.

These are the school's main strengths.

You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is good.

The school is a pleasant place in which to learn.

Children in Reception get off to a good start and make good progress.

A good range of learning activities and interesting topics is provided for you.

You get on well with each other and behaviour is good.

You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.

You feel safe at school because the teachers and other adults take good care of you and provide strong support and guidance.

You make positive contributions to the school and to the local community.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to do a few things to improve areas of the school.

Some of you in Key Stages 1 and 2 could be making better progress and reaching higher standards. We have asked the teachers to:

- match the work more carefully to your abilities, especially those of you who find learning easy
- ensure that learning and the lessons move along more quickly
- give you more opportunities to plan and organise your own work.

Senior leaders and staff need to check teaching more carefully and take steps to make improvements where needed.

You can all help by continuing to work hard. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector

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