

Lons Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112710
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	337994
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Crowther
Headteacher	Linda Williams
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the vast majority of time looking at learning. They visited seven lessons, observed five teachers teaching, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, the local authority's School Improvement Partner and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning, pupils' books, information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the School Improvement Partner's reports, safeguarding documentation, 52 parent questionnaires and 12 staff questionnaires.

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

- whether the declining trend in attainment at the end of Year 2 has halted and if more pupils than in the past are on track to attain the higher levels in writing
- whether boys attain as highly as girls
- the impact of support on the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how well governors find out for themselves the strengths and weaknesses in provision.

Information about the school

In this much smaller than average school, almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided in the Reception class. Children start in this class in either the Autumn or Spring term following their fourth birthday. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy School status, Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Eco Schools silver award.

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

Central to the school's work is the good quality of care, guidance and support provided for all. Parents recognise this and, for example, are very appreciative of the way the headteacher greets pupils at the start of the school day. As one parent typically commented, 'She is always there. This headteacher and staff will always go the extra mile to help our children!' Pupils agree and say they feel very safe in school. They are confident that adults will quickly help them if they are worried or upset. An outstanding feature is pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. 'You must eat sensibly, then clean your teeth and have plenty of fresh air every day,' explained pupils when asked the meaning of a healthy lifestyle.

Good quality care starts in Reception, where children quickly settle, becoming happy, confident learners. Planning for the indoor classroom is generally good, but although there are many outdoor activities available, the intended learning is not always explicit enough. The progress of individual children is not efficiently recorded, and it is not clear how assessments are used to inform each child's learning experiences. Staff know boys do not progress as well as girls in some areas, but there is no specific plan to rectify this, and responsibility for driving improvement in this key stage is unclear.

Although broadly average, pupils' attainment has declined since the last inspection. This decline has now halted and attainment is rising, especially in reading and mathematics. Progress overall is satisfactory and improving, and there are examples of good progress, especially that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils receive good targeted support, and work that is effectively tailored to their specific needs. Writing, as in the past, is a weaker subject in school, and current information shows few pupils are on track to attain the higher level, Level 3. Assessment is not used well enough to plan next steps of learning, and writing activities are sometimes too hard. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise their developing writing skills and boys do not attain as well as girls in this subject. This difference in attainment starts in Reception where mark-making activities do not always grab boys' interest.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. Well-targeted action has resulted in rising attainment and self-evaluation is mainly accurate. However, evaluations of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching are not yet sharp enough. Teachers do not receive enough advice on how to improve their teaching, and monitoring of planning and pupils' work is not regular enough to assure good progress. For example, although planning for English and mathematics is good, published schemes are used for other subjects, which are not adapted sufficiently well to meet pupils' needs. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supportive and their role of critical friend is developing well as they visit classrooms,

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finding out for themselves how the school's work should improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2010, raise attainment in writing, especially that of boys, by:
 - using assessment information carefully to plan activities that build systematically on the skills pupils already have
 - setting challenging targets for pupils to ensure the more able are given the skills they need to attain Level 3
 - providing exciting, purposeful writing activities that ensure the engagement of all pupils, especially boys
 - maximising opportunities for pupils to write independently in subjects other than English.
- By July 2010 improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring staff use the outdoor environment to promote children's development in all six areas of learning
 - checking learning regularly through observations that are carefully and efficiently recorded, and using this information to adapt the children's learning experiences
 - appointing a leader who is able to drive improvement in the provision, based on an action plan with clearly identified steps for action.
- By July 2010 sharpen up monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - ensuring lesson observations focus on pupils' learning, and provide teachers with clear guidance about how to make their teaching better
 - regularly scrutinising pupils' work to check the impact of teaching on their progress
 - checking assessment information is used rigorously to inform teachers' daily planning and that any published schemes used are adapted to meet pupils' needs.
- 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

In lessons pupils behave well and show they are eager to learn. They answer questions enthusiastically and particularly enjoy the opportunities for active learning as was seen in a lively Year 2 mathematics lesson when pupils practised their counting skills. Pupils say they know how to keep safe, well exemplified by two boys demonstrating, though role-play, the strategies they would use if approached by a stranger. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility such as being 'buddies' to the younger children and helping others at

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playtime. They have many opportunities to contribute to the wider community, and through their work as an Eco school, pupils have tried to reduce the acts of vandalism in the nearby park. Above average attendance confirms pupils' good enjoyment of school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the sensitive, targeted support they receive. However, although progress is satisfactory and in some instances good, assessment information is not used consistently rigorously enough to ensure pupils are given the right tasks to enable them to build up their skills systematically. This is more evident in writing where the scrutiny of pupils' work shows insufficient evidence of rapid progression in pupils' writing expertise. Even so, achievement overall is satisfactory, and pupils' good social and moral development, alongside satisfactory and improving academic skills indicate pupils are soundly prepared for the future.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Good relationships are a strong feature of most lessons which means pupils are confident that their responses to questions will be appreciated by their teachers. The

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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teachers' questioning skills are good and pupils are encouraged to share ideas and provide reasons for their answers. Teaching assistants are deployed well and clearly know what is expected of them. However, although teachers plan interesting activities, these are not always appropriate for pupils' needs. For example, those who are still learning to write simple sentences are inappropriately taught how to use speech marks. However, there is a strong emphasis on real-life experiences, and role-play is used effectively to enable all pupils to communicate their ideas. Work is marked regularly, although the impact of this is not always effective as comments are occasionally too difficult for pupils to understand.

Staff try hard to teach an interesting, exciting curriculum, for example, through work in the nearby forest environment. They are successful in engaging pupils' interest in most subjects although there is some way to go in promoting the same enthusiasm, especially of boys, for writing. Small group work is good as interventions are planned carefully to meet pupils' needs. Visits and visitors such as Rammy the Derby County mascot, Morris men and links with the Open Centre, enrich the curriculum effectively.

The care the school provides ensures there is a safe, secure learning environment. Staff are aware of steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of pupils. Good links with a range of outside agencies, including speech therapy, and educational psychology ensure additional support is available if needed. Induction procedures are very good and parents and carers of the children who have very recently started at school comment on how easily and happily their child has settled into school life.

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?

The tone for the caring ethos is set by the headteacher who is committed to ensuring that pupils feel safe and are happy in school. Staff also share the same commitment, and inclusion is high on the agenda with all determined that pupils are treated fairly and equally. Parents are particularly grateful for this and say they are kept very well informed about the school's work. The comments in the inspection questionnaire were very positive and many appreciated the outstanding communication arrangements. For example, the new texting service proved invaluable during the recent hazardous weather conditions.

Currently, monitoring and evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough to quickly rectify the areas needing improvement, as the leadership does not regularly check

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provision. Even so, there is a determination to make improvements, weaknesses are known, and priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate. Governors provide good support and their monitoring and evaluation role is developing well. They ensure the statutory requirements regarding safeguarding are fully in place and pupils are kept safe in school. Although the school effectively ensures pupils within school from different socio-economic and social backgrounds form a happy and harmonious community, work in promoting community cohesion with groups from other faiths and ethnicities is less well developed.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Reception with skills that are mainly in line with those expected for their age. They enjoy school life because staff provide a friendly welcoming environment in which they settle quickly. The strong focus on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills successfully enables them to work and play together with increasing confidence. Children make good progress in this area of learning because it is taught well. The safety and welfare of children is important to the staff and the importance of healthy lifestyles is promoted successfully. Staff work together effectively to organise a wide range of activities. However, the intended learning is not always clear, especially for outdoor activities. There is a satisfactory range of adult-led and child-initiated activities, but planning does not identify clearly how activities are adapted as a result of observations of children's learning. Even so, progress is satisfactory with some children making good progress so that, by the end of Reception, attainment is slightly above average for the majority of children. However, boys do not attain as highly as girls,

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especially in writing. The headteacher oversees the work of this key stage and its strengths and weaknesses are known by staff. Although this is satisfactory, the lack of a dedicated leader means that progress in rectifying weaknesses is not always fast enough. There is no action plan in place to improve provision, for example on how to accelerate boys' writing skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and almost all are delighted with all aspects of the school's work. They are unanimous in thinking their children are kept safe and in saying they are happy with their child's experience at this school. Comments such as 'a special place,' 'I cannot praise the staff enough' and 'the school provides a welcoming environment' are typical comments which confirm parents and carers very positive opinions. The inspection team agrees with these views and there are no areas about which a significant number of parents expressed a concern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lons Infant 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	73	13	25	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	81	10	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	54	16	31	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	65	12	23	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	73	11	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	67	14	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	71	14	27	0	0	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)	33	63	8	15	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	73	11	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	71	8	15	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	62	12	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	83	8	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	87	7	13	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Lons Infant School, Ripley, DE5 3SE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed our visit because everyone was so helpful and friendly. We judged your school to be satisfactory. We enjoyed talking to you and we can understand why you like school so much as there are many things that make it special. Here are some of them. You all say you feel very safe in school, and that is because the adults are always there to help you.

You all want to learn and your good behaviour means no time is wasted during lessons. You have an excellent understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, and I know some of you gave good advice to my colleague about eating sensibly and having plenty of fresh air.

Those of you who are 'buddies' do very good work in helping your friends who are sometimes lonely or upset. We think the friendship bench is a good idea.

We also think the work you are doing to prevent vandalism is very worthwhile. Well done!

Your headteacher and staff do a good job in looking after you and we know they want you all to learn as well as you can. This is why they have tried hard to make sure you get lots of interesting things to do and exciting places to visit.

We have suggested three things that we think will make your school even better.

Although you are doing better now in reading and mathematics than in the past, we think the school could do more to help you, especially the boys, to improve your writing skills.

Those of you in the Reception class need more chances to work outdoors, and adults need to make sure you are all learning as fast as you can.

Everyone needs to keep a more careful eye on what works well in school and to make sure that these things happen every day in each class.

Thank you again for your help and please give a big thank you to your parents and carers who took the time to reply to our questionnaire. It is good to know so many of them think the school looks after you well.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness

Lead inspector

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