

Lowerhouses CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Junior Infant and Early Years School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107698
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	356217
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jo Coles
Headteacher	Mr Paul Scrimshaw
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and 13 teachers were observed. The inspectors held discussions with staff, groups of pupils and with representatives from the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, including a review of improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching, records demonstrating the arrangements for safeguarding and a sample of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed 22 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 67 from pupils and 21 from staff.

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

- The current attainment, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6 and the rate of pupils' progress, particularly between Years 3 and 6 in writing.
- The rate of pupils' attendance and the effectiveness of procedures to improve it.
- Whether there is consistency in the quality of teaching, particularly between Years 3 and 6.
- Whether the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to boost achievement in writing.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders and subject coordinators in contributing to reviewing pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of provision.

Information about the school

The large majority of pupils at this smaller-than-average-sized school are from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from an increasingly diverse range of heritages. An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, although only a few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average and is increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. On site, there is a resource based unit providing for pupils with a hearing impairment and an assessment unit for nursery aged children with speech, language and/or developmental delay.

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. Pupils achieve well to reach broadly average attainment by Year 6. In this harmonious, friendly, safe and welcoming setting, pupils show good attitudes to learning and behave well. Pupils are polite and courteous, showing respect to adults and to one another. They are sensitive to one another's differences and, no matter their ability or ethnic background, get on well together. Provision in the hearing impairment and Early Years resourced provisions is outstanding and, as a result, these pupils make outstanding progress. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive. They say that their children learn in 'a highly inclusive setting, which ensures their happiness and success'. Although pupils' attendance is broadly average, a very small minority are persistently absent. Despite striking improvements in a few cases, there remains scope to improve the strategies used to promote better attendance among all parents and carers and with pupils.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. After this successful start, pupils continue to learn well until the end of Year 6. In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment by Year 6 has been rising, especially in mathematics and reading. Attainment in writing is also rising, albeit at a slower rate. Opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other curriculum subjects are sometimes overlooked. Similarly, pupils are not yet fully clear about their learning targets and their next steps to attain them. Nevertheless, pupils' good progress reflects many recent successful curricular adaptations and improvements in the quality of teaching, which is now good. Even so, between Years 3 and 6, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Best practices and policies are not yet always consistently well applied.

Since the previous inspection, the school has moved forward at a good rate with improvement evident in several areas. Dramatically improved attainment as pupils enter Year 1, for example, along with a curriculum that closely reflects pupils' individual and diverse learning needs, are examples of successes. The capacity to improve further is good. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders work effectively together. They track and analyse pupils' performance regularly, rigorously and accurately. Improvement priorities are identified swiftly and precisely, which in turn results in accurate self-evaluation that is shared among staff. Leaders are clear that their next steps are to strengthen the contribution of subject leaders in supporting efforts to bring about consistency in the quality of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum subjects
 - making sure pupils are clear about their precise learning targets and the next steps to attain them.
- Improve the quality of teaching between Years 3 and 6 so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring the best teaching practices evident are identified, shared and consistently well applied
 - developing the role of subject leaders so that they make a more effective contribution to monitoring the consistency of the quality of teaching.
- Improve attendance by extending strategies to promote better attendance with parents and carers and with pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good. In lessons, pupils behave well and work at a good pace. Challenging and practical activities help to sustain their concentration so that they produce a good standard of work. Pupils are attentive and keen to learn. Most pupils respond well to teachers' questions, although their concentration occasionally drifts when they sit as a whole group listening to their teacher, such as, at the start or end of lessons. This is because teachers' questioning skills do not always keep them all 'on their toes'. Even so, between Years 1 and 6, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those that speak English as an additional language, make good progress. The small number of pupils in each year group however, along with the sometimes unusually high proportion of pupils with special educational need or a statement of special educational needs means that attainment can vary from year to year. Despite this, generally attainment by Year 2 and 6 is on an improving trend. The proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected levels for example, in Year 2 in 2010 was broadly average and the highest in recent years. This reflects good progress from pupils' low starting points when they start school.

Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities learn together in harmony. Pupils that attend the Hearing Impairment Unit learn at ease among their peers in class. Difference is highly valued and celebrated often. Pupils talk knowledgably about the high expectations of their good behaviour. They are clear about the importance of upholding 'Lowerhouses Values' and of caring well for themselves, one another, their school, their community and the planet. They are very proud to belong to a school in which, they say, they feel very safe. Pupils relish opportunities they have to take on responsibilities, for example, as school councillors, play leaders or class monitors. They take part in a good range of opportunities aimed at improving their speaking and listening skills. This is helping to build their confidence and raise their self-esteem. This, along with pupils' good personal qualities, their good progress and improved attainment demonstrates that they are soundly prepared with the skills they need for the future.

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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' enthusiasm, good organisation, positive relationships, effective management of behaviour and the careful deployment of support staff all make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress. In good lessons, teachers regularly discuss with pupils the lesson objectives, ensuring pupils are clear about what is expected of them if they are to achieve them. Similarly, teachers' planning takes good account of pupils' varying needs. This is manifested in very precise and tailored questioning of individuals that both challenges their thinking and keeps their full attention. Recent staffing changes have, however, hampered efforts to firmly and consistently embed these good practices. Nevertheless, successful curricular adaptations, such as providing more opportunities for pupils to develop essential speaking and listening and reading skills, are helping to boost attainment. A good range of support programmes is used to boost the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose attainment falls short of the national expectations. Specialist teaching of pupils attending the Hearing Impairment Unit provides highly skilled support and exceptionally well matched activities, such as in the 'small steps' groups. Pupils' enjoyment of school and good

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

personal qualities mirrors the good range of practical, active and experiential learning opportunities on offer that helps to broaden their life experiences. The residential visit to Cliffe House, for example, is much enjoyed by older pupils.

Making sure that all pupils are well cared for and that any potential barriers to learning are eradicated threads throughout the work of staff at all levels. Good quality pastoral support radiates through day-to-day practices. The strong contribution of the learning mentor, along with the good partnerships fostered with parents and carers and with external support agencies, reflects the school's commitment to helping pupils with additional social or emotional needs. Efforts to promote better attendance with parents and carers are paying dividends. Even so, more detailed and frequent communication about the importance of regular attendance is needed in order to bring about more rapid improvement.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

In their quest to drive improvement forward, leaders forge successful partnerships beyond school and with parents and carers. Links established with the church, nearby schools, the local authority and external support agencies help to strengthen the quality of provision, for example, by providing staff with professional development opportunities and extensions to the curriculum. Furthermore, leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Resourced Provision provide support and guidance to other educational institutions and professionals.

A very strong emphasis is placed on the inclusion of all pupils in everything the school has to offer. Procedures to monitor pupils' progress serve to identify quickly and precisely any variances in pupils' performance and participation in school life. This demonstrates the school's good commitment to providing equality of opportunity and to narrowing any gaps. Safeguarding procedures are good and meet current requirements, contributing to the confidence that parents and carers have in the high quality of care. Since the previous inspection, the quality of governance has strengthened and is now good. Governors are clear about improvement priorities, such as improving attendance. They ensure budgets are well managed and are targeted in areas where there is most need. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Pupils develop a good understanding, tolerance and respect for the diverse backgrounds and abilities of others within their school. Opportunities for pupils to engage with diverse

groups further afield, nationally and globally, are being extended.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start in the Nursery and Reception classes, their skills are usually well below those typical for their age. The extremely warm and very caring relationships between adults and children, along with the bright, lively and well organised and resourced learning environment ensures that children, including those attending the Resourced Provision, quickly develop a real thirst for learning and feel very safe. Good attention is given to ensuring the welfare needs of children are excellently met. Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Adults plan a wide range of opportunities to develop children's independence, and to enable them to take on responsibilities. Children understand routines and boundaries, get along well together and behave well. Highly-skilled questioning of children by teachers, including in the Resourced Provision, ensures that children's small steps in achievement are pinpointed. Meticulous records of this information are used well to ensure that adults plan future activities that closely match children's varying needs. Some support staff, however, are still developing their skills in doing this. Nevertheless, in recent times, children's rate of progress and attainment by the start of Year 1 have risen dramatically. The majority of children now reach the goals expected of them nationally. This reflects a significant improvement since the previous inspection, which in turn reflects strong leadership and management. Through good teamwork, staff have successfully transformed the quality of provision. Leaders are clear about necessary further improvements, such as the need to strengthen provision for learning outdoors.

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

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

Although the proportion of parents and carers that returned questionnaires is low, they express their overwhelming support. They all agree that their children enjoy school, are kept very safe, and that the quality of teaching and leadership and management are good. Inspectors endorse these views. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the 'very positive relationships between home and school' and the 'supportive, friendly and open approach of motivated staff'. Parents and carers of pupils that attend both the Hearing Impairment Unit and Early Years Resourced Provision comment about the high quality of provision offered. They say that their children come on in 'leaps and bounds'; inspectors support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lowerhouses CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Junior Infant and Early Years 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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	77	5	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	73	4	18	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	68	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	68	7	32	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)	17	77	3	14	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	77	3	14	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	73	4	18	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	68	4	18	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	82	4	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	55	6	27	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



15 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowerhouses CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Junior Infant and Early Years School, Huddersfield, HD5 8JY

Thank you so much for the warm and friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed being part of your school community. You go to a good school. By Year 6, your attainment is similar to that expected for your age and you make good progress. We were particularly pleased to:

- find out about the many ways that your school has improved in recent times and that because of this, you are enjoying school a good deal and feel safe
- see your good behaviour and how well you all get on with each other and learn together so peacefully, no matter what your background or ability
- hear that you know how important it is to uphold the 'Lowerhouses Values' and the steps you can take to care for yourselves, one another, your school, the local community and the planet
- find out about the special jobs you have from such a young age and how much you enjoy making your school a happier and safer place to learn.

I have asked that some improvements be made. These are to make sure that:

- you reach higher standards in writing, by making sure that you are clear about your learning targets and that you have more chances to practise your writing skills
- the adults with special responsibilities check that the way you are taught means that you all learn equally well in all classes
- fewer of you miss school so that attendance improves.

You can help by always checking what you still have to do to reach your learning targets and by making sure that you all come to school every single day.

I send my very best wishes to you all for a very bright and successful future.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Dodd

Lead Inspector

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