

Lawford Mead Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114997
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357667
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Sach
Headteacher	Janette Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed all six teachers and visited sixteen lessons. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress, curricular planning documents, examples of the ways the school promotes community cohesion, evidence of lesson observations and information from questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 66 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent do teaching and curricular planning promote good progress in reading?
- How well do middle managers contribute to raising standards?
- How effective are the systems to reduce unnecessary absences?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average infant school where the large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their main language. The proportion of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of their special educational needs, is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has recently gained the Artsmark and achieved National Healthy School Status and International Schools 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is highly regarded by parents and carers for the way that the outstanding care, guidance and support offered to their children makes them feel so safe. The exceptional links between the school and home mean that parents and carers are very well informed about the school's work and know just how to help their children at home.

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well because of the good teaching. The teachers make lessons fun and make pupils feel special. Typical of the views of many parents and carers, one commented, 'It's great to see my child do so well and skip to school smiling every day'. Pupils' good behaviour and hard work contribute much to their good progress. By the time they leave Year 2, their attainment is above average in writing, average in mathematics and a little below average in reading. Pupils make rapid progress in their writing because teachers give them exciting topics to write about and make sure they take care with their work. In reading, the teaching of word-building skills is not always good enough to ensure pupils can tackle unfamiliar words easily. In mathematics, pupils make good progress and benefit from many opportunities to use practical resources to improve their calculation skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and grow in confidence as they move through the school. Teachers and teaching assistants support them well in class but at the same time give them good opportunities to find things out for themselves.

Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements. One commented, 'This school's all about learning and we do that really well.' Their learning, however, is not just about academic subjects. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the way they show an acute sense of right and wrong and think very deeply about issues such as poverty and bereavement. The outstanding provision for community cohesion means pupils have a deep awareness of the different faiths, cultures and social backgrounds of people at home and across the world. They have an exceptional understanding of the need to live healthy lives and speak with great authority on the importance of the best foods to eat to stay fit. This is consolidated by their energetic work on the school allotment and participation in the 'mucky hands' project. From the nursery onwards, pupils take responsibility for their community extremely well. For example, they negotiate school rules, show a deep awareness of environmental issues and represent the school proudly in musical and sporting events.

Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum that provides many good opportunities to develop their basic skills while giving them the chance to enhance their creative talents. The extensive range of clubs at lunchtime and after school is very popular and does much to extend their learning in areas such as music, sport and dance.

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Good leadership and management are key to the school's success. The headteacher leads with high expectations of pupils and staff and a determination to overcome any barriers to learning. She embraces new ideas readily and has made excellent use of partnerships with other organisations to improve the provision. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. The rigorous self-evaluation systems are based securely on thorough analysis of attainment compared with other schools, regular checks on the quality of teaching by the headteacher and effective action to rectify any underachievement. The school is developing the role of the middle managers, but as yet they are not sufficiently involved in checking on the quality of teaching and learning or providing teachers with sharply focused analyses of pupils' progress in order to raise standards further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, raise attainment in reading by ensuring that all staff have the necessary knowledge to teach pupils how to make words from letter sounds.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they:
 - take greater responsibility for checking on the quality of teaching and learning
 - produce clear guidance to staff on how progress could be improved within their subject.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy reading and read stories such as Cinderella with reasonable expression to show their dislike of the 'ugly sisters'. Not all, however, find it easy to work out unfamiliar words and they guess rather than use their knowledge of sounds. They make good progress in mathematics and enjoy tasks such as using camels to improve their skills in division or data to produce accurate graphs of different types of cars. Their writing is a strength because they enjoy using exciting words to make their stories come to life. The school has raised boys' attainment by giving them writing tasks that stimulate their interest, and some of their descriptive work on giants and castles is outstanding. All pupils, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender or social background, make equally good progress.

Pupils develop their personal and social skills exceptionally well. They listen carefully to their teachers and concentrate hard in lessons. They care deeply about the environment and the eco team works effectively to remind others to save energy and recycle waste. They have an excellent awareness of how to keep safe and understand the potential dangers of fire and busy roads. Nearly all attend regularly but a few miss time at school when taken on holiday in the middle of a term. Nevertheless, their good academic progress and awareness of how education provides a wide range of work opportunities in later life mean they are prepared well for the future.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

In typical lessons, teachers make learning interesting by thinking of different ways to complete common tasks. For example, one teacher asked pupils to count up in fives and twos using soft, gruff and very high voices. They made rapid progress and were still talking about it at lunchtime. Teachers use questions well to make pupils think carefully and give them confidence by fulsome use of praise for their contributions. The teaching of writing and mathematical skills is a strength because teachers focus clearly, establishing the basics of spelling and calculation. This approach gives pupils the confidence to tackle any challenge. In reading, some teachers confuse pupils by sounding out letters incorrectly and this makes it hard for them to work out new words.

Teachers make accurate judgements on pupils' progress and use this information well to plan future lessons. They mark pupils' books diligently and give good guidance on the next steps in their learning.

The curriculum includes very well-planned personal, social and health education provision that develops pupils' awareness of what it takes to be a good citizen. A wide range of visits and visitors enhances the curriculum and teaches pupils much about the lives of others in the world. The topics provide good opportunities for pupils to hone their skills in writing and mathematics but fewer to develop their confidence in reading. The school makes very good use of the outdoor areas to extend the curriculum. In particular, pupils

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enjoy growing their own vegetables and learning about different creatures in the wild area.

Parents and carers appreciate the way all adults know their children so well and are always there if any individual needs help. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable benefit from excellent care, both from the school and from outside professionals. The outstanding systems to support pupils new to the school mean that they settle quickly and soon feel part of the school 'family'. The school does much to encourage good behaviour, and pupils, parents and carers confirm that bullying of any sort is rare. The school works very closely with parents and carers to encourage regular attendance, and absence rates are falling steadily.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The leaders' priorities for improvement are ambitious and relevant to the school's needs. They work well as a team and are very effective at rectifying weaknesses in pupils' attainment and progress. For example, by providing pupils with exciting writing tasks they soon began to write at greater length and use more interesting words. Systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are good but at present limited to observations by the headteacher. Other leaders are beginning to take responsibility for attainment in their areas of responsibility but are not sufficiently involved in checking on the teaching at first hand or using data to help teachers raise attainment further. Providing equal opportunities for all pupils is high on the school's agenda. The progress of different groups of pupils is tracked carefully and extra help is given to any with potential barriers to learning. For example, pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from such effective support that their attainment by Year 2 is among the highest in the school.

Parents and carers are kept very well informed about their children's progress and a very high proportion attends 'family days' when they work alongside their children in activities such as science investigations. The school also leads innovative schemes, including one that involved grandparents in pupils' learning, which help strengthen the partnership between home and school.

The leaders work very closely with other organisations to enhance pupils' academic and personal development. For example, extensive links with local schools provide valuable opportunities for shared staff training and enhance provision for writing, sport and music.

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A major strength of the school is the way it promotes community cohesion. Very strong links with the local community, extensive work on different faiths and cultures and excellent partnerships with other schools in the United Kingdom and overseas give pupils a deep awareness of cultures at home and further afield. The leaders evaluate the impact of these initiatives and are always seeking ways to improve them.

The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. Its members have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are not afraid to hold the leaders to account. They ensure that the school exceeds safeguarding requirements: systems are robust and reviewed regularly.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. They achieve well from starting points that are well below those typical of their ages. The good focus on language skills means that children make particularly good progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Parents and carers speak very highly of the way the school prepares their children for entry into the Nursery and then into the Reception class. This helps them settle quickly and enjoy their learning. The staff ensure that parents and carers feel very welcome in school and keep them well informed about their children's progress.

The teaching and learning are consistently good, and children enjoy many opportunities to explore the world around them and discover things for themselves. The classrooms are well organised to give children a rich variety of experiences in all the different areas of learning. The outdoor area is stimulating and used well to extend the work done inside.

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Children choose happily from the range of activities on offer, and enjoy writing about their families as much as making porridge or a new chair for 'Teddy'. Staff observe children's learning and development carefully, but do not always make the best use of these assessments to plan future activities.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is good, because adults give them responsibility for taking care of themselves and ensure they know how to stay safe while taking calculated risks. Children work in a secure environment and are supported well by adults who know their individual needs exceptionally well. The provision is led and managed well, with good communication between the different classes and a clear focus on how to make improvements.

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

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very positive about the school. They are particularly appreciative of the consistently good teaching and their children's progress. They feel extremely well informed and value highly the opportunities to attend school events and learn about new curricular initiatives. They are pleased with the way the leaders run the school and keep their children safe.

A very small number of respondents commented on the way isolated instances of poor behaviour are managed, but the inspection team explored this and found that behaviour is managed very well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lawford Mead Infant and Nursery 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 185 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	79	12	18	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	76	12	18	1	2	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	71	18	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	70	18	27	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	67	21	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	67	20	30	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	64	22	33	1	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)	36	55	24	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	67	19	29	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	36	36	55	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	50	28	42	1	2	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	46	70	16	24	1	2	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	73	16	24	0	0	2	3

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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



16 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lawford Mead Infant and Nursery School, Chelmsford, CM1 2JH

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard in lessons and playing so happily in your beautiful grounds. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how much you like school. You think yours is a good school and the inspectors agree.

You behave well, listen carefully to your teachers and make good progress in your work. Some of your writing is brilliant. You have an excellent knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives. You think a lot about people who are not as fortunate as yourselves and you try to help them. The inspectors were impressed by the way you take responsibility and look after your school so well. The school makes sure your parents and carers know just how well you are doing. There is an interesting range of activities provided for you and you enjoy the many clubs at lunchtime and after school. Your teachers make learning fun and are good at helping you when you find things difficult. All staff at the school take really good care of you and keep you very safe.

In order to improve, we have asked your school to:

- help you to make faster progress in reading; you can do your part by reading as much as you can at home as well as in school
- make sure that the teachers in charge of subjects check more carefully on how well you are learning and help you make even faster progress.

Best wishes and keep working as hard as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston

Lead inspector

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