

Leftwich Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111137
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310513
Inspection dates	20–21 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary Nunn
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Harrison (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Old Hall Road Leftwich Northwich Cheshire CW9 8DH
Telephone number	01606 42849
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools and serves a mixed residential area of Northwich. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is just above the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and only a very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. None is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below the average of most primary schools. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Inclusion Quality Mark. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been absent unwell for a prolonged period and the senior leadership team was led by the deputy headteacher as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils. From a below average starting point on entry to the school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall to reach below average standards in English and mathematics. In the prolonged absence of the headteacher, the leadership team has maintained the drive to improve pupils' achievement and has given clear direction to staff about what actions need to be pursued. Though the outcomes are yet to be fully realised, there are good indications that standards are rising. In the current Year 6, for instance, standards in English and mathematics are broadly in line with those expected nationally for all schools. It is a similar picture in Year 5. These pupils are achieving well and are also on track to meet challenging targets. The school recognises it must now maintain this improvement in every class, especially in pupils' writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve well in science and standards in Year 6 have been similar to those found in schools nationally in the last two years.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and the overwhelming majority behave well. A very few pupils display challenging behaviour but they are managed well by the staff and cause minimal disruption to other pupils' learning. Levels of attendance are average and are affected by a small number of parents taking family holidays during term time in spite of the repeated reminders from school. Pupils take on responsibilities around school sensibly and cooperate well with one another. There is an effective pupil council. The school provides good standards of care, guidance and support for pupils and this leads to these positive outcomes. The staff have recently refined systems to track how well pupils are achieving so that they can target appropriate support for underachievers. Currently, these systems are not as rigorous as they should be in all classes to improve progress.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is satisfactory with good features. All lessons have features of good teaching and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are best in the Reception class and Year 6 but they are not consistently good in all age groups. The monitoring of lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning is satisfactory but best practice is not yet shared well enough and pursued by all staff. Strengths of the curriculum include aspects such as how well it promotes pupils' enjoyment of school in subjects such as art and music as well as visits, and their personal development through residential trips. However, there are inconsistencies across classes in the range and coverage of the curriculum to promote pupils' writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There is dynamic leadership by the acting headteacher and she is ably supported by the expertise of an experienced senior leadership team. Governors are effective in their role and support the work of the school well. The changes introduced to promote improvement, such as raising expectations for what pupils can achieve, have been received well by staff. The success of these is seen in the much improved standards at the top end of the school and also in the Foundation Stage where children are now getting off to a good start and so are better placed at the start of Year 1 to learn effectively. The school has taken effective steps to improve its work since the time of the last inspection but there is more to be done to raise standards. Under the current leadership team the school has built on existing strengths well and has good capacity to improve. Partnerships with other schools locally and various agencies promote well the quality of the curriculum and the support that the school provides for pupils. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Foundation Stage at the start of the Reception Year. Teaching and learning are good and the children achieve well in all areas of learning. The children are well on target to reach the goals for learning by the end of the school year and this is a significant improvement on achievement in the past which was adversely affected by an unsettled period caused by staff absences. The current team of Foundation Stage leader and teaching assistants is very effective in providing a high- quality environment for learning with a strong emphasis on children's imaginative play, communication, language and literacy. Indoors, the children benefit from a well -organised range of activities. Links with the private nursery and the adjacent Year 1 class are good and help smooth the transition at the beginning and end of the year. Resources are shared well among children in the Reception class and Year 1. Good use is made of the outdoor area and work is planned to start in the summer on a covered area so children can work and play outdoors all year round.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the range and coverage of the curriculum in writing and mathematics is consistently good across classes so as to raise standards.
- Make sure that the systems to track pupils' progress are used equally well in all classes to improve progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to match best practice.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Assessments in Year 2 have shown that standards have been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics in recent years. The school has taken steps to improve pupils' achievement by improving provision in the Foundation Stage, assigning a member of the senior leadership team to teach Year 1 and monitoring the work of the whole of Key Stage 1 more effectively. This work is ongoing and the outcomes are still to be fully felt but there are clear indications from tracking information that the pace of pupils' learning is improving.

In Key Stage 2, evidence of past performance shows pupils have been achieving satisfactorily, though standards in Year 6 have remained below or well below average in English and mathematics. There is no trend of significant differences between the performance of boys and girls or other groups in school. Actions taken by the school, such as improvements to the mathematics curriculum, are beginning to lift the achievement of pupils. The outcomes are evident in the improved achievement of pupils in the current Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, these improvements are not having as much impact in all classes in the key stage and standards of pupils' writing and mathematics are not rising quickly enough. This is an important area for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily overall and some make good or better progress thanks to the good support of staff working in small groups and one-to-one with them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are enthusiastic and have good relationships with one another and with staff. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and chatty. They say there have been examples of poor behaviour at playtimes but they know what to do if they are concerned. Exclusions in recent years have been an appropriate response to unacceptable behaviour and have been effective in changing it. Punctuality to school is satisfactory but the lateness of a small minority has led to more rigorous and effective action being taken to improve it. Pupils have a good awareness of how to look out for one another, be safe themselves and live a fit and healthy lifestyle, indicated by the good take-up of places on sports activities after school. There are very good opportunities to take on responsibilities in school, for example, as pupil councillors, assembly monitors, house and games captains. The pupil council has had its recommendations acted upon and pupils are very pleased with the improved playground equipment in recent weeks. Their contribution to the wider local community is good. Pupils learn how to work independently and as a team. They develop satisfactory basic skills of literacy and numeracy to take forward to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory leading to the satisfactory achievement of pupils. There are, however, areas of strength. Where teaching and learning are best, teachers show secure knowledge and have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. These lessons have good pace and both class teachers and teaching assistants contribute very well to small group work and individual instruction. This level of good practice has not yet spread to all classes and is the next target for the school. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards in lessons and pupils regularly use laptop computers in subjects across the curriculum. There are good strategies for marking pupils' work which help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. This is not consistent, however, across all classes. Pupils evaluate themselves how confident they feel tackling work in English and mathematics and this is good practice. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's work and steps are underway to encourage more parents to be involved in helping their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Strengths lie in the contribution it makes to pupils' personal development through lessons of personal, social and health education and 'Circle Time' when pupils have the opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts. The curriculum has a good impact on pupils' understanding of how to live a fit and healthy lifestyle, for instance, through physical education, after-school sports and games and the focus on healthy snacks. Pupils' enjoyment of school is enhanced by exciting residential visits as well as other visits and visitors. Art features highly in school as do the very good opportunities for music, both instrumental tuition and singing. French and Spanish are taught and there is an Italian club. Aspects that are satisfactory are the curriculum for improving pupils' writing and for mathematics, which are good in Year 6 but too variable in some other classes. A good start

has been made in planning for a wide, exciting curriculum with linked themes but this is at an early stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

These aspects are well-established and strong features of the school. Very positive relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to feel safe and happy. The overwhelming majority of parents have the fullest confidence in the care it provides. Parents find staff very approachable, evident in this typical comment, 'The teachers are very helpful and easy to talk to.' All aspects of health, safety, child protection and safe recruitment of staff are in place. The school pursues rigorous procedures to reduce any unauthorised absences. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised and benefits from the work of well-trained teaching assistants. Procedures to track the pupils' personal development are good and those to track their academic progress are satisfactory. The latter are currently being developed to set increasingly challenging targets for improvement and to identify what needs to be done to help underachieving pupils. These procedures are not yet, however, used with the same rigour across all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the time of the last inspection, the school has addressed well the key issues to improve the standards of pupils' speaking and listening and to make better use of other subjects to promote literacy and numeracy. Recent initiatives, for example, improving the quality and use of assessment and improving how well provision is monitored, have arisen from a well-focused school improvement plan. Pupils' achievement is at its centre but actions require time for consolidation and the outcomes are yet to be fully realised. More challenging targets are now set based on a good analysis of data and urged on by higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. The senior leadership team has been the driving force behind all this. The level of commitment of all staff is evident in their continuous effort to cater for the needs of pupils. The determination to provide equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination is good. The process of self-evaluation is satisfactory, involves all staff and key governors, but has overestimated some aspects of the school, such as achievement and standards, and teaching and learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now I would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. This means there are some things that the school does well but there are other things the staff need to do to make the school better. These are some of the things that are good:

- The staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy.
- Your behaviour is good and you are growing into sensible students who take responsibilities seriously and want to learn.
- You are achieving well in science and have good opportunities to do well in art and music.
- The staff provide you with very good opportunities for sports, visits, clubs after school, residential visits and for interesting visitors. I hear you really enjoyed your visit to Cadbury's World!
- The acting headteacher and senior staff have put in place a lot of good things to help you to improve in your work.

These are the things that need to be improved:

- Make sure that in all classes the curriculum for writing and that for mathematics covers all the aspects you need to learn to help you reach higher standards.
- All teachers need to check carefully on how well you are achieving to help you improve the progress you are making.
- Staff need to make sure that all the lessons you have are the best they possibly can be.

As you can see, you have a part to play in this: work hard in lessons and do your very best!