

Lawford Mead Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114997
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311784
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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 on roll	124
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr A Sach
Headteacher	Mrs Janette Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Trent Road Chelmsford Essex CM1 2JH
Telephone number	01245 256086
Fax number	01245 344293

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether teaching enables boys to make good progress and close the attainment gap between boys and girls that is apparent when children enter the school, and whether the school is doing enough to promote and maintain good attendance. The effectiveness of the school's work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being and their achievement was also explored. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, teachers, governor representatives and children. In addition, there were observations of parts of lessons, a school assembly and a family learning workshop. The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents including information on standards and children's progress, its self-evaluation, the school development plan and parent questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of some social and economic disadvantage. The vast majority of children are White British. Several minority ethnic backgrounds are represented, each in very small numbers. Very few children speak a first language other than English, but the proportion entitled to free school meals is above average. Although the proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than the national average, a large number of these have complex needs.

In the summer of 2006, building refurbishment complications led to a significant loss of data and resources and the school was temporarily relocated to two different sites. The school re-opened on its usual site in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, notably, the tremendously strong links with parents and the wider community, which are used very effectively to enhance the curriculum and promote outstanding care, guidance and support for children. The headteacher provides strong leadership that inspires the confidence of staff, parents and governors, and has successfully built on the school's strengths in maintaining a strong team ethos and community spirit. This has been critical in seeing the school through the recent buildings crisis.

The positive relationships throughout the school promote a happy learning environment in which children thrive because they feel safe and secure. The exceptional pastoral care ensures that children and their families receive the support necessary to settle them into school and achieve well. Comments such as 'teachers and assistants really do understand, care for and provide a very good education tailored to suit the needs and capability of each child', reflect parents' appreciation of the school's work. The school utilises the expertise of other professionals very well to ensure that vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are fully included in school life. Safeguarding procedures are thorough. Academic guidance is good; children know their individual targets, and these are reviewed regularly with parents.

A consequence of the exceptional care is that children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Children are confident, friendly and well behaved. They live up to the school's behaviour code, which is, 'be good, be kind, work hard and listen'. They have good attitudes to learning, and, as one little boy explained about school work, 'they (teachers) make it hard, but this is good because you have to practice to learn'. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, and many choose to eat healthy meal options. Children make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Exceptional circumstances led to a significant drop in attendance last year. However, robust systems to promote good attendance are having a positive impact and attendance is now satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are good. Interesting activities and resources such as video clips are used to good effect to engage children's interest, particularly that of boys. As a result, children enjoy their lessons, and are eager to learn. Children are provided with good opportunities to talk about their learning. They are assessed regularly and the information is used to direct the focus of teaching. However, in some instances, learning objectives lack clarity or are not matched closely enough to the tasks children are expected to carry out. Consequently, children do not always build upon their previous learning in a coherent way.

Achievement is good. The good teaching enables children to make good progress from attainment that is generally below national expectations on entry and achieve satisfactory standards by the end of Year 2. The school has worked hard to improve children's writing since the last inspection. Standards in writing, and overall, have been in line with or slightly above the national average except in 2007, when they dropped slightly to below average in reading. The school has refocused its attention on reading, and assessment data indicates that curriculum improvements are accelerating children's progress significantly. Boys' attainment is lower than girls' on entry and when they leave. This is partly due to the high number of boys with complex learning difficulties. While current data indicates that boys are making good progress, the school does not sufficiently analyse summary progress data for gender and other groups, in order to target resources at narrowing any differences more quickly. Children with learning

difficulties or disabilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality support they receive.

The curriculum is good, with some excellent features. An integrated approach, which links subjects through themes and topics, makes learning more meaningful to children. Exciting lunchtime clubs, visits, visitors and other activities on offer do much to promote a love of learning in children. Older children say they enjoy school because of these activities. Parents say Nursery children talk constantly about school and want to attend even when they are ill, and on Saturdays. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support teaching and learning. The curriculum makes a good contribution to children's personal development and promotes a strong sense of responsibility for the natural environment. Family learning programmes offered in conjunction with the local community college provide opportunities for families to jointly experience learning in a positive and fun way. They also help parents and carers to develop new skills to support their children's learning. The school has started to make additional provision for children identified as talented or gifted, although this work is still at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management are good. All leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school sets challenging targets for itself and the children, and school improvement priorities are strongly focused on raising standards. Systems for tracking the progress of individual children are robust. However, these do not yet include rigorous methods for tracking and comparing the progress of groups on a regular basis and this can sometimes slow managers' response to emerging trends in children's performance. Governors are supportive and well informed. They have appropriate systems in place to enable them to find out how effective the school's work is. Progress since the last inspection is good and demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall, although some of the teaching is only satisfactory. Children enter school with a very wide ability range, and standards that are generally below age-related expectations, particularly regarding their personal and social development, and their language, literacy and communication skills. Transition arrangements are very good. By the end of their first term in school, children are well settled; they work and play well together, and display high levels of confidence. They have access to an attractive indoor and outdoor learning environment and the curriculum promotes high levels of independence. Children make good progress, and, by the end of the Foundation Stage, most of them are working within national expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve tracking systems by using summary data more regularly to measure the progress of different groups of children, so that resources can be directed more quickly at eliminating any variations in their attainment or achievement.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2008

Dear Children

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

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me during my recent visit to your school. You really looked after me during dinner time and I enjoyed listening to what you had to say. As I promised, this letter is to tell you what I found out.

- Your school is good and some things about it are excellent.
- The way the adults work with your parents and other people to look after you and make sure that you are happy and do well in your work is impressive (that means it's really, really good).
- Those of you who need a little more help get very good support.
- Your parents appreciate the way all the adults at school look after you and help you to learn.
- You are very good at looking after each other and your environment and obey the school rules to be good, be kind, work hard and listen.
- You told me you enjoy all the different and exciting activities at school, in lessons and the lunchtime clubs.
- The teaching is good and helps you to do well in your work, particularly in your writing. However, some of you do better than others.

To make your school even better, I have asked the teachers and other adults to check the information they have about how well you are doing more carefully and regularly, to make sure that you all do as well as each other, and to help some of you catch up more quickly.

I know the school has been working hard with you and your parents to get you to school on time and more regularly. As a result, your attendance is much better now than it has been in the past. I hope you will continue to attend school regularly so that you can learn even faster. Keep up the good work and I wish you all the best.

Florence Olajide Lead inspector