

# Lawford Mead Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115001
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311787
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Glynn Storer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	144
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Jane Hasler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Emma Dawson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Trent Road Chelmsford Essex CM1 2JH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 354134
<b>Fax number</b>	01245 344294

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This small junior school on the outskirts of Chelmsford serves a community in which levels of social and economic disadvantage are above average. Around a quarter of all pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and, of the small number from minority ethnic groups, few have a first language other than English. Pupils' attainments on entry to Year 3 vary, but are generally below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is similar to that in schools nationally. During the last three years, there has been a high turnover of staff. The headteacher and almost all of the senior leaders and other teachers have joined the school during this time.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Lawford Mead Junior School provides a good education for its pupils. In the past, an extremely high turnover of staff had an adverse effect on pupils' learning and achievement. However, the outstanding leadership of the headteacher has brought together an able team of senior staff and younger professionals who are already successfully driving up standards and the quality of education that the school provides. A major strength of the school is that everybody is pulling in the same direction. This is partly because staff share the headteacher's vision. It is also because highly effective staff training and rigorous management systems secure a good degree of consistency in all aspects of the school's work.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. Teachers plan a good range of exciting activities, which motivate pupils and engage them in their learning. They use assessment information effectively to match tasks to pupils' abilities and to set challenging targets that promote good progress across the whole ability range. Consequently, the rate at which pupils make progress is accelerating, and standards are rising rapidly. Current standards are broadly average but school tracking and evidence from lessons indicate that achievement is now good, both in lessons and over time, and that standards are set to rise further in 2008.

Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. They become partners in the learning process because the quality of care, guidance and support for them and their families is outstanding. As one parent put it, 'The relationship that is promoted between home and school is an invaluable factor that enables my child to feel safe, secure and valued.' The school promotes personal development and well-being effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although they do not currently learn enough about the richness and ethnic diversity of society in modern Britain. Nevertheless, pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and their relationships with others are good. Their enjoyment of learning and their contribution to the school community are outstanding. Improvements in these areas have been central to creating the necessary conditions for effective learning.

The school is going from strength to strength because leadership and management are good. The headteacher's exceptional drive and enthusiasm rub off on staff and build morale. School self-evaluation is accurate because senior staff and governors check and evaluate all aspects of the school's work thoroughly, yet supportively. As a result, staff and whole-school development have brought about significant improvements. Subject leaders contribute satisfactorily, but some are newly in post and so there is scope for their role in checking on standards and quality to be strengthened. Nevertheless, robust management procedures and a strong team spirit and commitment from staff give the school a good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum makes systematic provision to prepare pupils for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.
- Give subject leaders a more prominent role in evaluating standards and quality and in planning for school improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

From 2004 - 2006, standards varied, but remained well below the national average. They were at their lowest in 2006 when standards in English, mathematics and science subjects were extremely low and pupils' achievements were inadequate. However, the school's drive to raise standards and to secure good achievement on the part of most pupils is now paying off. Preliminary results from 2007 show a marked rise in standards. Pupils' progress improved in all year groups in 2006 - 7 and was good overall. Achievements in Year 6 were particularly good, and for some outstanding. Consequently, considerably more pupils attained or exceeded nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science than in previous years and overall results for 2007 were much closer to the national average. School tracking, pupils' current work and their performance in lessons indicate clearly that rates of progress are continuing to accelerate. Previous weaknesses in the performance of boys have been eliminated and pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are achieving equally well. Consequently, standards are set to rise above current national averages in 2008, if similar progress is maintained.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety and put this into practice in their work and play. They are adopting healthy lifestyles. The school provides two hours of physical education per week; a growing number walk or cycle to school and most take part in sport and recreational activities. Pupils willingly seize opportunities to take responsibility in the classroom, around the school and in the wider community. House captains, play leaders and school councillors all take their jobs very seriously. They and other pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community.

Pupils' spiritual, cultural, moral and social development is good overall. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Attendance is slightly above average; pupils attend lessons with a willingness to learn and the enjoyment they show is often outstanding. Pupils have very good relationships with adults and each other. However, they are not yet taught enough about life in an ethnically diverse and multi-cultural society. Pupils work well together and are keen to take part in the range of activities offered. Current levels of basic skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for their future studies but not all get experience of financial decision-making.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships are good and are based on teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their ability to cope with challenging work. Consequently, whilst much teaching is lively and engaging, it also places demands on pupils. Teachers make good use of teaching strategies such as filmmaking, drama and active 'hands-on' learning to motivate all, but especially boys, who have sometimes been unwilling learners. They make good use of assessment information to plan tasks which promote good progress, because they closely match pupils' abilities and prior attainments. However, in a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. At times, this is because pupils are unclear about what they are expected

to learn and are too dependent on the teacher to move them on. At other times, teachers do not act promptly enough when pupils' work rate slows.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is of a good overall quality. The school modifies its basic curriculum effectively to enable almost all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to achieve well. The school has a creative approach to curriculum planning. A particular strength is the integrated strategy for the teaching and reinforcing of literacy skills. Tasks are carefully planned so that pupils' work in virtually all subjects strengthens their basic literacy skills. At the same time, the interest that projects in geography, history or science promote gives meaning and purpose to reading, writing, drama or other literacy-based activities.

The enrichment programme supports the basic curriculum effectively. A variety of events, visits and a range of visitors to the school add to the quality of pupils' experience and promote positive attitudes to learning. However, the school recognises the need to include a wider variety of speakers to develop pupils' understanding of life in a multi-cultural society. There are already some enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils, but this provision is at an early stage of development. Regular extra-curricular activities provide for a wide range of interests and there is a particularly good take-up of those promoting healthy lifestyles.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care guidance and support for the pupils are outstanding and this has been the key to the recent rapid progress made by the school. All arrangements for child protection and for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Teachers and other staff know pupils as individuals and work as a team to support and care for them. The school has improved systems for tracking pupils' progress and personal development. Pupils know and understand their targets and are well motivated to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sensitive support so that they also make good progress alongside others in the class.

The care for vulnerable pupils is outstanding. The pupils feel safe and secure in the knowledge that any incidents are swiftly and firmly dealt with. The school makes the best use of a range of outside agencies to support pupils with particular needs. The school also uses all available opportunities to involve the parents in their children's education and to inform them of current educational issues. Parents and carers are very positive about the school, appreciating the high quality care given to the pupils. One wrote, 'Lawford Mead is bringing (our child) up to a much higher level, using all resources available and with the help of such caring staff.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Over the last three years, the school has improved enormously. During this time, the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy and the governing body, has built a stable senior leadership team, recruited and trained an effective staff and introduced rigorous approaches to school

management. She has been largely successful and this is why, despite challenging circumstances, pupils thrive and achieve well. A major success has been the training of a relatively inexperienced staff. They now work as committed and effective teams. Morale is good and rigorous monitoring means that consistency in classrooms is growing. As a result, pupils' progress is improving rapidly. School self-evaluation is accurate because monitoring by senior staff and governors is thorough. Staff with responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school's work have a satisfactory view of where strengths lie and of what needs to be improved. However, because some staff with subject responsibilities are inexperienced as leaders, there is scope for them to be even more influential in driving up standards by developing their monitoring roles further. Nevertheless, team spirit is good, the professional development of staff is highly effective and governors are relentless in the quest for higher quality and standards. Consequently, the school is well placed to improve further.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lawford Mead Junior School, Chelmsford CM1 2JH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You have a good school. We really enjoyed watching you at work and at play as well as talking to pupils and others about all of the good things that you do in school.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are rising.
- Almost all of you behave well, work hard in your lessons and make good progress.
- The adults in school help you to learn and take exceptionally good care of you.
- Your teachers plan many interesting and exciting activities which help you to learn.
- You thoroughly enjoy all of the activities that there are for you and most of you are growing up to be active and healthy.
- Miss Dawson, the staff and governors have worked hard and have already made many things better.

In order to help, we have asked Miss Dawson and the other adults to do two things.

- We have asked them to teach you more about the lives of people from the many different backgrounds, cultures and faiths who are part of the local and wider community.
- We have also asked teachers who lead the different subjects to check more regularly on how well you are doing, so that they can help the school to improve even more.

We hope that you all continue to work hard and do well at Lawford Mead Junior School.

Best wishes

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector