

Lowfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106997
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	377509
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Wintle

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Radford
Headteacher	Christopher Holder
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Wintle

Additional inspector

Martin Pye

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed all teachers and a number of teaching assistants teaching 19 lessons, of which two were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a series of phonics lessons (in which pupils learn letter patterns and the sounds they represent). They looked at work in pupils' books, the school's policies and plans, including the school development plan, the data tracking of pupils' progress, records on safeguarding, the local authority monitoring information, health and safety and attendance records. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and staff and leaders at all levels. The inspectors considered 70 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff. No responses were available from the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. A very high proportion of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, most of whom speak English as an additional language. There are very high levels of pupil mobility, with many pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The school exceeds the current floor standard. The school has had improvements made to its buildings in recent years and there have been a number of staff changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, and a new senior leadership team. The school runs a breakfast club. The school has achieved a number of awards, including Healthy School status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Under the direction of the headteacher and leadership team it has improved in key areas since the last inspection. Pupils and parents and carers hold positive views of the school.
- Children start school with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. They achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and start to catch up with pupils of a similar age. Attainment still below average at the end of Key Stage 1, but the gap is narrowing. Pupils make good progress overall, especially in Key Stage 2. Progress in Key Stage 1 is sometimes satisfactory, particularly in mathematics. Pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average attainment in English and mathematics, although attainment in mathematics is lower than that in English. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those pupils speaking English as an additional language make good progress because of high-quality interventions to support their learning.
- Teaching is good overall. Pupils mostly make good progress because teachers' expectations are high and staff work diligently to create a calm and welcoming climate in which pupils say that they feel well supported. Teachers use effective questioning to challenge pupils and the strong systems to help pupils achieve their targets are securely embedded into teaching practice. Where pupils make slower progress, there are fewer opportunities in lessons for them to share and discuss their ideas through speaking and listening. The progress of a small number of pupils is slowed because they arrive late for lessons.
- Strong and trusting relationships underpin pupils' good behaviour. Pupils' positive attitudes to their work and good behaviour make a positive contribution to their learning.
- The school is well led and managed. Senior leaders, staff and the governing body have a shared sense of purpose and they all work together well to achieve their ambitions. Members of the senior leadership team know their school well and have a strong commitment to making the school as good as possible. The

curriculum is broad and balanced, although there are limited opportunities for exciting first-hand experiences that would help to make pupils' learning even more enjoyable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve rates of progress at Key Stage 1 in order to raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, so that attainment is at least in line with the national average by:
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons
 - limiting the teachers' input, especially during lesson introductions, to ensure that pupils take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensure that all teaching in the school is consistently good or better by:
 - consistently developing speaking and listening skills through giving pupils more time to share and discuss their ideas
 - increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to apply their key skills across the curriculum by giving them first-hand experiences.
- Work more closely with parents and carers and with the local authority in order to improve the punctuality of the small minority of pupils who arrive late to school.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge well below expectations for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy and number skills. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress, particularly in their development of language and literacy skills. This is because adults give good attention to children's understanding of letters and sounds. These experiences prepare them very well for their learning later in their education although, by the time they start Year 1, their attainment is still below average.

In Key Stage 1, the school's rigorous tracking system clearly confirms a trend of improving progress for most pupils. Attainment in writing at the end of Year 2 is broadly average. Attainment in reading and mathematics while steadily improving is still below average. In reading, pupils make good progress from their starting points but this is less the case in mathematics. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in English, including in reading, and mathematics is broadly average, although it is higher in English than in mathematics. All groups of pupils, including those pupils speaking English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress and any gaps between the attainment of different groups of pupils are closing.

Work seen in pupils' books and around the school, together with observations made during lessons, shows that all groups of pupils make good progress overall. They learn well in lessons overall. For example, in a Year 6 lesson typical of many others seen during the inspection, pupils made good progress in their understanding of how to write explanation using language features of non-fiction materials. This is because the teacher's planning was based on a thorough understanding of every pupil's ability. Consequently, activities met pupils' learning needs well.

Inspectors largely share the view expressed by the school, the governing body and the vast majority of parents and carers that pupils make good progress. The overwhelming majority of pupils say that the school helps them with their learning. One typical statement summed it up: 'The school makes me feel good at things!'

Quality of teaching

Inspectors endorse the view expressed by parents and carers that teaching is good. In most lessons, the pace is brisk so that time is used well to promote independent learning. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, where pupils were learning how to write a report, they took control of their own learning. They were able to make decisions, share and discuss ideas with each other. This motivated them to do their best and helped the teacher to assess and build upon their current understanding.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in knowing fully how pupils learn. They do their best to make lessons interesting and varied and because of this pupils are attentive and concentrate well. Relationships are strong and trusting. Expectations are high so pupils know exactly what they have to do to succeed. In a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils were able to explain what the lesson purpose was, what level of work they were doing and how best to make future progress. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work successfully to provide a good balance of activities so that children are able to make choices, investigate and explore.

Reading and writing are taught effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants have good phonics knowledge and their daily input is having a good impact across the school. Pupils listen well to their teachers, but too few opportunities for pupils to share their ideas, such as through paired talk or collaborative tasks, sometimes limits their progress. Occasionally in mathematics lessons, pupils do not have enough time or the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. This slows the pace of learning and restricts pupils' progress to satisfactory,

The school's ongoing pupil assessment tracking systems are very effective. Assessment of pupils' progress is extremely thorough and underachievement is quickly identified. As a result, teachers can target the learning of all groups of pupils, which has led to most pupils making good progress. There are well-embedded systems for teachers to give feedback, both orally and in books. Marking clearly supports the pupils making progress by highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement. One pupil commented that 'We all know our targets because that's what we always do. It helps me improve at my work.'

Activities are based on the planned curriculum and take into account the needs of all pupils. The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident through the impact of high expectations and good relationships on pupils' learning and well-being.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour was judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection and it is now good. Parents' and carers' views of behaviour are accurate. Pupils behave well in and around the school and are very welcoming to visitors. At the start of Early Years Foundation Stage and right through the whole school, the large majority of pupils are courteous and helpful at all times and show good manners. From an early age, pupils know and understand the rules and routines and they are expected to treat adults and each other with respect and to collaborate well in lessons.

Pupils are confident that all members of staff are there to help them and are adamant that any problems are quickly sorted. Pupils talk maturely about any incidents of bullying and state that it is not tolerated at Lowfield. Positive attitudes and a good work ethic are constantly reinforced. Young pupils are highly motivated by the system of rewards and these have had a good impact on learning because they are well understood by even the youngest children. Movement around the school is generally careful and this reinforces pupils' personal safety.

Pupils say that they are happy coming to school and feel safe. They demonstrate this through their attendance, which has improved over time and is now average. The school gives clear messages to pupils, parents and carers about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Nevertheless, despite the many rewards and procedures for following up poor punctuality, a small number of pupils often arrive late for school. The school recognises the need to continue to work closely with parents, carers and the local authority in order to improve this situation.

Leadership and management

School leaders and the governing body provide good leadership to a committed staff. The senior leadership team knows the school well and has driven the improvements in attainment over the last three years. Working with the active governing body, leaders have ensured that the issues raised by the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. In addition, the emphasis on improving the fabric of the building, especially for those in Key Stage 2, means that pupils are provided with a positive and stimulating environment. The headteacher leads by example and has developed an effective team of senior leaders who support and drive through the vision of the school. This, coupled with the improvements made since the last inspection, shows the school's good capacity to improve further.

Members of the governing body are well informed and very aware of the progress and attainment data and its relationship to the quality of teaching in the school. Some members of the governing body are familiar figures in the school. They have received good support from the leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, the school's management systems are robust and run smoothly.

In particular, success is underpinned by rigorous procedures in which everyone plays a part in checking the effectiveness of the school's work. As a result, the school's own self-evaluation is good and the systems in place for tracking pupils' progress are comprehensive. A key driver in improving the quality of teaching is the good system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the key stage leader ensures that liaison with pre-schools and with parents and carers helps children to settle quickly into the life of the school and has ensured that teachers are fully informed on how well children are doing.

Members of the leadership team have succeeded in developing a broad and balanced curriculum that effectively matches the needs of all pupils. It is effective in supporting pupils' good progress, but school leaders recognise the need to further enrich planned learning, with an added emphasis on first-hand experiences. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school has a very positive relationship with most groups of parents and carers, who say that they find school staff approachable and very helpful. The school promotes equal opportunities well and is very effective in tackling any form of discrimination. There is a good awareness of safeguarding issues among members of the governing body and all staff. The school is a very cohesive community and pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well together. The school works very well with local agencies and community groups to promote pupils' understanding of the local community's religious and social context.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowfield Community Primary School, Sheffield, S2 4NJ

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much and liked having the opportunity to talk with so many of you during your lessons and at playtimes. You and your parents and carers told us that Lowfield is a good school and we agree.

- The teaching is good and this helps you make good progress.
- You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well during your time in school. Attainment is broadly average.
- You are well-behaved in your lessons and around school. You also told us that you enjoy school and feel safe and secure while at school
- You have good relationships with your teachers and we found that you worked hard in the lessons we saw.
- The headteacher and all the other adults in the school, including the governing body, are working really hard to make school a good place to be and a school that you all are proud of.

The inspection team have asked your school to do three things that we feel will make your school even better. They are:

- to improve your attainment in Key Stage 1, especially in mathematics
- to make sure you have more exciting opportunities for learning through interesting first-hand experiences
- to make sure that all pupils arrive at school and to lessons on time.

I hope that all of you can help your school by continuing to try your very best in all lessons, coming to school regularly and on time and always behaving well. We wish you the best for your future

Yours sincerely,

Michael Wintle
Lead Inspector

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