

Lowbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109900
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	310139
Inspection date	29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Hill
Headteacher	Mr D Rooney
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	The Fairway Cox Green Maidenhead SL6 3AR
Telephone number	01628 671355
Fax number	01628 773673

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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: pupils' progress and standards, aspects of pupils' personal development and the curriculum, and the quality of teaching, gathering evidence from observation of lessons and break-times, the school's records, samples of pupils' work, questionnaires returned by parents, and discussion with pupils, staff and governors. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school that has grown significantly in numbers in the last few years. Pupils' social and economic circumstances vary considerably, but are broadly average. A large percentage of pupils leave or start at the school other than at the usual times. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with the rest coming from a variety of different minority ethnic backgrounds. Virtually all pupils have English as a home language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average, and is very high in some year groups. The majority of these pupils have problems with literacy and numeracy, or have behavioural or emotional difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lowbrook is an outstanding school. It is a welcoming and harmonious community where pupils thrive academically and socially.

Pupils' achievement is excellent and they reach standards that are above average at the end of each key stage. Results of national assessments have fluctuated from year to year, because of differences in the abilities of different cohorts, but overall are rising fast. Last year the progress made by pupils in Year 6, since they were in Year 2, was in the top 3% nationally, and this year's group are making similarly excellent progress. Pupils who struggle with literacy and numeracy do particularly well. Their exceptional progress is boosted by the excellent support they receive from skilled teaching assistants, through a wide range of effective intervention programmes.

The main factors in pupils' high achievement are outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers have excellent relationships with classes and inspire them to want to learn. Expectations are high of work and behaviour and pupils respond very positively, taking a pride in their achievement and working hard. Pupils in Year 2 were quick to tell the inspector that one of the best things about school was '...nice and kind teachers'. Particular strengths in teaching include the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enliven lessons and enhance teachers' explanations. Challenging questioning encourages pupils to refine and improve their work. Teachers make very effective use of the school's thorough assessment systems to plan different tasks that match pupils' varying needs. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss their work in pairs. This helps them to sort out their ideas and makes a very strong contribution to their understanding and their personal development.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and they have very positive relationships with each other and with adults. They thoroughly enjoy their time in school, at work or at play. Pupils in Year 6 told the inspector that this is '...a really perfect school', and agreed that they '...can't think of any bad things about the school'. Pupils have a secure understanding of healthy lifestyles, believe they have improved their diet and are extremely enthusiastic about the wide range of opportunities for exercise, in lessons and in clubs. They make an immense contribution to the community in school and beyond, particularly through the school council and their involvement as 'peer mediators' in resolving conflict in the playground. Pupils are convinced that this has resulted in great improvements in behaviour.

Pupils' high achievement is strongly supported by the excellent academic support and guidance provided. High expectations are set for pupils' progress and a careful track is kept of how they are doing. Individuals who are not meeting these high expectations are quickly identified, and given extra help to enable them to succeed. This applies to pupils who are potential 'high-fliers' as well as to those who struggle with literacy or numeracy. Pastoral support is equally strong and is firmly rooted in positive relationships with parents and their children. Very good support is given to pupils who start at other than the usual times. They settle in very happily, and many make exceptionally good progress socially and academically, sometimes from a very low base. An exceptionally well-organised and taught programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) contributes to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This programme is a key part of the school's excellent curriculum. Other strong elements include an exceptionally wide range of well-attended clubs, the imaginative use of ICT, and very good provision for dance and drama.

The school's many strengths stem from its outstanding leadership and management. Recent major improvements to the buildings and grounds have been very successful, but have not distracted leaders from their clear focus on raising achievement. The headteacher provides excellent leadership to colleagues and very clear educational direction to the school. Staff are supported well but also challenged to improve their practice. All levels of management, including a very effective governing body, contribute well. The school is innovative and always keen to try new and ambitious ideas, but maintains an unremitting focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Strong teamwork from the staff contributes to the exceptionally thorough monitoring of teaching and progress. Any issues are identified quickly and staff tackle them energetically and enthusiastically. This has led to major improvements in the last few years, and shows the school is extremely well placed to improve further.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, praising the leadership of the headteacher, the way the school has improved, and its care for individuals. Their views are typified by one who wrote, 'We are very pleased with how our son is maturing - academically, socially and emotionally - and attribute this success to the strong and enthusiastic team at Lowbrook.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Reception class enables children to have a flying start to their full-time education, and to make excellent progress. Parents praise how well their children have settled into the friendly and welcoming environment. Children take part in a wide range of exciting activities, which are made real to them through a lively thematic approach. For example, the telephone call made to the 'Troll's mummy', when they learnt he was ill, completely enthralled them, and they launched themselves enthusiastically into a variety of activities designed to cheer him up. The excellent teaching has the same strengths as teaching in the rest of the school. The adults work as a very effective team and have very positive relationships with the children. They are particularly good at developing children's understanding by getting them to talk about what they are doing and explain their ideas. Staff are using the new outdoor area well to extend the range of experiences offered.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has no major issues needing attention, but the inspector agrees that staff should implement the wide range of ambitious projects in the school development plan, to consolidate and take forward the excellent provision.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

07 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowbrook Primary School, Maidenhead, SL6 3AR

Thank you for all your help and your very friendly welcome when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day, particularly watching you in lessons. A special thank you to the pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, who came to talk to me. You told me how much you enjoy school, and I could see why. I think that Lowbrook is an outstanding school, and these are some of the best things about it.

- You all make excellent progress because your teachers are so good at helping you to learn.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you all get on really well with each other and with the adults. The peer mediators are very good at helping you keep things this way.
- You have a great many interesting things to do, both in class and in the huge number of clubs before and after lessons.
- The staff keep a very careful eye on how you are getting on and make sure that anyone who needs extra help gets it.
- Mr Rooney, the governors and the staff are very good at organising the school and are always looking for ways of making it better.

I agree with the Year 6 children who told me that they could not think of anything serious that needs sorting out. However, the adults have lots of exciting ideas to make life even better at school, and I have agreed with them that they should do this by following the plans they have written already.

I am sure you will help by keeping up your hard work and excellent behaviour, and telling the adults your ideas through the school council.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill

Lead Inspector