

Light Oaks Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105894
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	324289
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	322
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Allcock
Headteacher	Miss Lisa Thelwell
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Lancaster Road Salford M6 8LU
Telephone number	0161 788 8099
Fax number	0161 788 8099

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Light Oaks is a larger than average sized school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Eligibility for free school meals is below average but rising. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average and declining. A Nursery and three Reception classes form the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision. There is a before and after school club on site, which is run by a private provider and did not form part of this inspection. The school has gained the Activemark, Healthy School's and Eco-bronze awards.

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has recently been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Light Oaks is a good school. It is friendly and caring and gives pupils a firm foundation for their future learning. The innovative curriculum fosters pupils' thirst for knowledge and gives them self-confidence and independence. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They relish the responsibilities that they have and carry these out in a diligent and mature manner. Their behaviour is excellent: they show maturity and cooperation that belies their young age. Their understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles is very impressive. Even one of the very youngest pupils commented knowledgeably, after riding a tricycle outside, that, 'It is good: your heart rate increases after exercise and then slows down again when you rest.' The inclusion of all pupils, whatever their background, is given high priority. Relationships are very strong and pupils have a good awareness that they should respect people's differences. Day-to-day care is sensitive to the needs of all pupils. Child protection arrangements and those to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements. Pupils say confidently that there is always someone to turn to for help if they should need it.

The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership and, in a short space of time, has established a clear vision and enthusiasm, shared by all staff, to bring about improvement. She is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher. The senior leadership team gives good direction to the recently formed curriculum teams. School self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. It is clearly linked to development planning. As a result, the school knows where improvements are needed and how to bring them about. However, curriculum coordinators are very new to their roles and do not play a part in this evaluation process. They are just starting to check the quality of provision in their subject areas, but they do not check on the progress pupils make. As a result they are not in a position to contribute fully to raising standards. Community cohesion is satisfactory with strengths within the school's community. The good partnerships with local schools, the community and external agencies all help to raise the quality of pupils' education. There are firm plans to develop partnerships further to extend pupils' understanding of diversity within society and global communities. A shared common vision amongst all staff and governors, together with correct priorities for improvement, demonstrates the school has good capacity to improve further.

Achievement across the school is good overall. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 2 pupils reach standards that are above average and significantly more reach the higher levels than nationally. Teaching and learning are of good quality and some teaching is outstanding. All teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and clear explanations are made of what pupils are to learn. Pupils confirm that marking is helpful and constructive and clearly pinpoints what they need to do to improve their work. Progress across the school is good overall. However, although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, it is uneven. This is because occasionally work is not matched precisely enough to their needs, or the usually good support they receive from teaching assistants is not available. In these instances their progress is slightly weaker.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well from below average start points on entry to Nursery. Effective induction arrangements enable them to settle in quickly and adapt to school routines swiftly. The partnership with parents is good and they are fully involved in their children's learning. Relationships are very supportive, so that children make outstanding gains in personal and social development. They quickly learn to take turns, share equipment and cooperate with each other. Their behaviour is exemplary. Children are cared for well. Classrooms and the outdoor area are safe, happy and secure areas. There is a good balance between tasks that children choose for themselves and those that are led by an adult. Children are fully engaged by their learning, have positive attitudes and confidently choose the activities they wish to take part in. However, although the outdoor area is planned well, to cover all the areas of learning, it is not an inviting area and, as a result, children do not readily choose to go there. The school is fully aware of this and has clear plans in place to address this. Good teaching ensures that children learn well and develop confidence and independence. Early speaking, listening and writing skills are given priority. This lays a good foundation for the development of children's future literacy skills. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. As a consequence, most children are working at the nationally expected level when they enter Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and teamwork is strong. Assessment is detailed and thorough, although occasionally too long is spent on observations and recording. The use of children's learning journals is a particularly strong feature of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These involve children in reviewing what they have learnt and deciding what they need to do next to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of curriculum coordinators so that they can evaluate the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility and check on the progress pupils make.
- Provide additional adult support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ensure work is precisely matched to their needs and abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school achievement is good overall. Most pupils enter Year 1 with the skills and knowledge that are expected for their age. They build well on this strong start through Years 1 and 2 and make good progress overall. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Significantly more pupils than average reach the higher levels in all three subjects.

While achievement is good overall for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it is sometimes inconsistent. In those lessons where work is accurately matched to individual ability and need and sensitive guidance is provided by teaching assistants pupils take small, but measurable steps in their learning and make good progress. However, when work is not carefully tailored to these pupils' needs or adult support is not provided, progress is not as strong.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness is outstanding. They develop excellent social skills, are self-confident, independent and very enthusiastic about their school. Pupils state confidently that, 'Everyone is friends with each other. If you are lonely a playground pal will come and help you.' They have a good understanding of environmental and energy saving issues. Their awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society and global citizenship is less well advanced, although the school has clear plans to address this. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. They play together extremely well and show care and concern for each other. They make a good contribution to the wider community through fundraising events and to the school community as members of the school council and Eco-committee. Pupils are proud that their views are taken into account and feel they have made a difference to school life. Above average standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology give them a good start to their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very good relationships between teachers and pupils are a consistent strength of lessons. As a result pupils try hard and are fully engaged in activities. Strategies to accelerate pupils' learning through talking with partners, for example, are used well in most lessons. The skilful use of questions to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding are features of many lessons, but this is not consistent in all classes. When practice is outstanding, expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high. A very wide range of imaginative activities and tasks capture their attention and help them make connections in their learning, which is rapid.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is imaginative, creative and firmly focused on developing the whole child as an individual. Subjects are linked together within themed areas, with many practical activities that pupils can choose for themselves, for example, during 'change over days'. Great emphasis is placed on the promotion of pupils' key skills and knowledge, as well as their personal development and well-being. Pupils show immense enjoyment and engage extremely well in all activities, as a result their confidence and self-esteem grows. During 'change over days' the curriculum is well organised. However, arrangements to track the development of pupils' skills and ensure their choice of activity is carefully recorded lack rigour. The school recognises this and has very clear plans to address this. The curriculum is adapted satisfactorily for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with particular gifts or talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of day-to day care are excellent and parents acknowledge this strength. Teachers know pupils very well and this does much to ensure that each child is safe, happy and ready to learn. Health, safety and welfare arrangements are very good. Good systems are in place to identify pupils' needs and to seek additional help from external organisations. Overwhelmingly, parents hold the school in high regard, appreciate that staff are approachable and know that any issues or concerns regarding their children are dealt with promptly. Pupils state confidently that, if they do not understand their work, teachers will always help them. However, learning journals and learning targets are not used consistently well across the school to ensure that that pupils are fully aware of how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together. With the good support of the two assistant headteachers, they have collected an accurate picture of the school's performance and the changes that need to be made to secure future improvement. They are well supported and challenged by competent governors who are not afraid to ask searching questions and hold the school to account. Realistic but challenging targets are used to help raise standards. Leaders are confident in making the necessary adjustments to school practice to raise standards. For example, there are very firm plans to refine the system for checking on pupils' progress so that information collected is more robust and readily accessible for all members of staff. The senior leadership team provides good guidance for the newly restructured curriculum teams. However, curriculum coordinators are not yet fully involved in checking pupils' progress. The school has identified this as an area for improvement. It has good systems in place for staff development and training to underpin this process.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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



1 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Light Oaks Infant School, Salford, M6 8LU

Thank you for helping with the inspection of your school by talking about your work, the activities you take part in, your lessons and your school. You were extremely helpful, polite and friendly. I thoroughly enjoyed my short time at Light Oaks, especially watching you choose and take part in so many exciting activities on 'change over day'.

Light Oaks is a good school and it is clear from talking to you that you are happy there and proud of it. These are some of the things I found out.

- You all behave extremely well, really enjoy learning and try very hard with your work.
- All adults take excellent care of you and help you to stay safe and healthy.
- You make good progress, achieve well and reach standards that, by the time you leave at the end of Year 2, are above average.
- Your teachers make lessons and activities interesting and fun and when they mark your work they explain clearly how you can improve.
- Your school plans lots of exciting and different ways for you to learn.

To make your school even better I have asked your headteacher and governors to provide more adults to support those of you who find learning more difficult and to ensure the work you receive is always at just the right level. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely with the governors to help plan what needs to be improved. Many of the teachers who take responsibility for subjects are very new to these roles. I have asked your school to help them carry these roles out more effectively, particularly in checking how well you are doing in different subjects areas.

You can help too by continuing to try your very best and working hard. Kind regards and thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields
Lead inspector