

# Larklands Infant School

Park Road, Ilkeston, DE7 5DR

**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher, other leaders and the governing body together form an effective and professional team. They are well focused on improving teaching and achievement. As a result, the school is improving steadily and well.
- Leaders make well-judged decisions about the school. They evaluate its effectiveness and the quality of its teaching accurately.
- The early years provision is good. It is managed well. Most children make good progress. An above-average proportion reaches a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- There are good systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Good teaching and attention to the pupils' personal as well as their academic development result in the pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe at school and adults pay good attention to their welfare.
- Pupils achieve well and they leave with attainment that is above average.
- A good community spirit and atmosphere of mutual respect exists across the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Parents are supportive of the school and almost all would recommend it to other families.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The ability of pupils in Year 1 to link letters with sounds is not as high as that of most pupils nationally.
- Although it is closing rapidly. There is still a gap in attainment between boys and girls at the end of Year 2.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in 14 lessons. Three of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Registration times were also observed.
- On the first day of the inspection, all Reception, Year 1 and 2 classes were taught physical education by specialist sports coaches. These coaches are employed by the school using funds from the physical education and sport premium. A sample of the coached lessons were observed by the inspection team.
- On the second day, the Nursery classes were involved in performing a Christmas Nativity concert for parents. One of these performances was observed by inspectors.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work, heard a sample of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 reading and met with groups of pupils. Many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils.
- Discussions and conversations were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and the Nursery manager in their roles both as senior leaders and subject coordinators. Meetings were also held with the special educational needs coordinator, the literacy and numeracy coordinators and other teachers at the school. In addition, discussions were held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting was also held with the local authority's senior school improvement adviser.
- A wide range of school documents was reviewed. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies and reports on the school's strengths and aspects for development, monitoring records and reports, safeguarding records, curriculum materials, information provided for families, and governing body documents. The school's data, including records of pupils' progress, were also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to an inspection questionnaire for school staff.
- The online questionnaire, Parent View, was completed by 42 respondents and their views were taken into consideration. The 98 responses to the school's own most-recent annual survey of its parents, last carried out in April 2014, were also taken into account, as were the views of the families inspectors spoke with at the school gate at the start of both days.

## Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Malam

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is average in size when compared with other primary schools.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first language.
- There is a single Nursery class; all other year groups have two classes each. Children attending the Nursery do so part-time during either the morning or afternoon sessions. Children attending Reception classes do so full time.
- At some 31%, the proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils previously known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average at about 18%.
- Some 3% of the pupils currently at the school have an Education and Healthcare plan. The school is in the process of implementing the new code of practice for pupils who have special educational needs and is gradually implementing Education and Healthcare plans for those pupils for whom this is appropriate.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further and enhance pupils' achievement by:
  - reviewing the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and placing more of an emphasis on the teaching of phonics throughout the curriculum
  - sharing good practice so that teachers are more consistent in the ways they demonstrate the sounds that letters make so that pupils are clear about how to pronounce those sounds
  - working with other partner schools to refine and develop further the ways phonics is taught at the school, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Reduce further and close the gap in attainment between boys and girls by the end of Year 2 by:
  - raising the proportion of boys making better than expected progress to enable more to reach higher than average standards in their work
  - ensuring consistent challenge for the school's most-able pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1 and for boys
  - making marking more consistently explicit in recording guidance as to what the pupils need to work on to improve further.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's effective leadership is helping to ensure the school's increasing success in enabling pupils to make good and better progress. A positive aspect of the school's approach is its teamwork; this supports leadership at all levels well. Senior leaders frequently monitor each aspect of school life.
- Subject leaders and year group staff work cooperatively. The more experienced teachers and subject leaders are good at sharing their skills and expertise with those who are either newer to the profession or new in their posts as subject leaders. This supports the school's approach to professional development as well as the teachers' ability to evaluate accurately the impact of their work on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and supportively. Teachers and their assistants are responsive to the school's ways of ensuring accountability for their work.
- The school ensures that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are met. The induction of new staff into the school, both generally and in relation to child protection is rigorous. There is also a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and that none experience discrimination. This is linked well to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and its promotion of British values through developing, for example, the pupils' understanding of 'fairness'. This is an aspect concerning which the school has made very good progress since the last inspection.
- Cultural diversity is now promoted well; for example, through displays of pupils' artwork based on other cultures. During registration time in a Year 1 class, some pupils greeted their teacher in Japanese and the teacher replied in Welsh. This added to the pupils' understanding of the broad range of languages to be found spoken in contemporary Britain, while helping pupils to understand how people may communicate in different ways.
- The school has developed a good curriculum which it has ensured is relevant to its pupils. It has made good progress in developing its approach to the new National Curriculum. What it has chosen to teach, including through its 'themed' approach to topic work, promotes interest and excitement for the children. Families are kept well informed about its developing approaches through information on the school's website.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) has proved a weakness over the past two years and pupils' results in the Year 1 phonics check have been below average. This situation is now improving as training for staff is raising their expertise in this area. The teaching of, and pupils' learning in, phonics forms a major part of the school's improvement planning.
- The local authority monitors the school regularly. The improvement advisers have played a helpful role in aiding the headteacher to establish links with other local schools within the authority, particularly to help develop the teaching of phonics. The school works increasingly closely with other local schools, as well as the local authority, to ensure its assessments and the data it provides on pupils' attainment and progress are reliable and verified.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly check that the pupil premium funding has a good impact on the achievement of eligible pupils. This funding is being used effectively, particularly in ensuring additional staffing and resources are available to provide extra tuition and to ensure that no pupils are disadvantaged.
- Excellent use is being made of the primary school physical education and sport premium. This is significantly enhancing the opportunities for pupils to participate and do well in sports and physical education. The funding is currently being used to provide specialist gymnastic teaching for pupils, and coaching for staff across the school. This term, class teachers have been supporting the sports coaches and using the time to observe closely and assess the children's progress. Next term, the teachers are to take over from the coaches and, under their guidance, put what they have learnt into practice. Pupils' gymnastic skills and use of apparatus have been refined and, as a result, these skills are above those

expected for their age.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors show a strong commitment to the school. The governing body works closely in partnership with leaders and staff. Governors visit regularly and provide helpful feedback to staff through their reports on such visits. This approach enables the governing body to develop a good appreciation of the school and how it works.
- Monitoring, and an effective understanding of the school’s data, together with regular and helpful reports from the headteacher, ensure that governors know and appreciate how the school is performing in relation to others nationally. The governing body also ensures that teachers’ salaries are linked to pupils’ progress, teaching quality and the national *Teachers’ Standards*.
- The governing body ensures that all legal requirements are met in full, including those relating to pupils’ safeguarding.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their attitudes to learning are also good. In lessons, pupils concentrate well on their work. They listen carefully to each other’s ideas and learn to value each other’s views. Teachers and other adults work together to ensure good teamwork and positive working relationships. The pupils respond positively to this and it is reflected in their attitudes towards each other.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance rates have improved since the last inspection; attendance is now in line with the national average. The care and guidance provided for pupils, both generally and for specific individuals, ensures that pupils’ personal, social and emotional development is good. Pupils understand that they should respect each other because all of them are ‘special’ in some individual way.
- Pupils talk about, and understand what they describe as the ‘need to be good’. They say that they have to think about what they do. The use of a visual ‘beanstalk’, where pupils move their own photographs up and down with the aim of reaching a golden cloud at the top, gives the pupils a tangible sense of what they are doing right, or wrong, and how well they are achieving. The pupils were the first to draw inspectors’ attention to the ‘beanstalk’ and often mentioned it. This method of behaviour management is clearly effective.
- Most pupils show pride in their work and demonstrate good levels of concentration. However, there are variations in the presentation in some pupils’ books between different aspects of their work. When pupils are given specific guidance about the quality of their work, they do take this on board.

**Safety**

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Discussions with pupils show that they trust the adults at the school to keep them safe. All parents spoken with during the inspection, and those responding to the Parent View online questionnaire, confirm that their children are happy and feel safe in school. No parent felt that bullying was a problem.
- Discussions with pupils show they understand that a few of them may be ‘unkind’ to others at times and show a relevant understanding that bullying is wrong. None felt that any kind of ‘unfriendly’ behaviour was a problem for them at the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding, for their ages, of how to keep safe. The ability of pupils to pay good attention to their own and others’ safety and well-being is evident in aspects of school life, such as the physical education lessons, and in the ways the pupils interact with each other outside of lessons. There is a consistent approach to behaviour management by staff to which the pupils respond well.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants understand well the strengths and specific learning needs of individual pupils across the full range of ability, from those who need additional help with their learning to the most-able pupils. Pupils of all abilities respond well to the daily challenges offered by the teaching. This is raising standards steadily throughout the school.
- The teaching of mathematics is consistently good or better and has helped pupils to make rapid progress in this subject. The teaching of reading and writing, and the development of a love of books, is typically good. The teaching of phonics has been a relative weakness in the recent past but is now improving. This has been a key focus in the school's development plan and forms a major target for teachers' performance management.
- Teachers are improving their skills at demonstrating letters and the sounds they make but there is still some inconsistency in the ways they pronounce the sounds. There is good teaching practice in the school, which it has started to share more effectively. The local authority is also supporting the school in putting it in touch with other schools where there is recognised outstanding practice.
- The school has started to look more closely at the performance of its more-able pupils and how the teaching can challenge them further. There is a clear policy and approach for identifying and supporting such pupils but there is not yet always a consistent approach to providing harder work for them in all lessons.
- Particularly in Year 2, any misconceptions pupils may have about their learning are picked up quickly by teachers. Teachers help to clarify pupils' understanding and encourage them to develop their own ideas and strategies in both English and mathematics work. This is helping pupils to make more effective links with their previous learning. The teaching encourages pupils to 'have a go'. Pupils receiving additional support realise that making mistakes is often an important part of learning and is not something to fear.
- Marking is regular and mostly linked to the targets set for the pupils in each particular piece of work. In mathematics, the school has recently realised that the target sheets in each pupil's book are not entirely appropriate to the new National Curriculum for mathematics and its developing approach to new systems of assessment without National Curriculum levels. Teachers are currently reviewing these targets so they can be used more effectively to help pupils understand their next steps in learning.
- Pupils say that they get good oral help and advice from their teachers following each piece of work. However, this is not always appropriately reinforced through written comments in their books to remind pupils of what they need to do to improve and maintain that improvement successfully.

### **The achievement of pupils**

**is good**

- Children join the school in Nursery or Reception with skills and development which are broadly typical for their age. Pupils overall, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in each year group and achieve well. By the end of Year 2, they have gained above-average standards overall.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2014, pupils with no identified special educational needs attained well. In reading, they were a term and a half ahead of similar pupils nationally. In writing and mathematics, they were around a term ahead of similar pupils.
- The most-able pupils do well. An above-average proportion of pupils attain the higher levels in the assessments at the end of Year 2. In 2014, half the pupils attained Level 3 in reading. This proportion was almost twice the national average.
- School data show that, during the last academic year, the school's most-able pupils made the equivalent of a term's better progress than that of their classmates overall. The most able in the current Year 2 had made nearly two terms better progress over the course of Year 1.

- When hearing pupils read, inspectors found that even the weakest readers in Years 1 and 2 were able to break words down successfully into their various sounds, although some had a little more difficulty in putting the words together into sentences. The school's most-able readers in Year 2 are reading fluently and with meaning, including giving 'character' to speech in the text. There is good support for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language to help them gain a practical competence in the language.
- A weakness in Key Stage 1 has been the outcome for pupils in the national Year 1 phonics screening check. Girls have proved significantly stronger in developing their reading skills than boys. The large majority of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and require additional support with their learning are boys.
- School data show three times as many boys as girls on the special educational needs register. Most of these pupils achieve well, sometimes achieving the equivalent of a term's better progress than expected over the course of a year. The proportion of boys needing additional support also helps explain the differences in attainment between boys and girls. This gap is closing because of the increasing success of teachers and teaching assistants in providing extra, and specialist, support. However, by the end of Year 2 in 2014, although boys attained slightly better than other boys nationally, they were the equivalent of nearly two terms behind the girls. Closing this gap, and enabling boys to achieve as well as girls, is a major focus of the school's improvement plan.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least the same good progress as their classmates. They were just over a term ahead of similar pupils nationally in reading, and less than half a term behind all pupils nationally. They were just over a term behind their classmates. In writing, disadvantaged pupils were around half a term behind similar pupils nationally, but two terms behind all other pupils nationally and almost a year behind their classmates. This was linked to the weaker performance of boys. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils were a term and a half ahead of similar pupils. They were a term behind their classmates but their attainment was in line with all pupils nationally.

### The early years provision

is good

- Good leadership ensures that provision and children's achievement in the early years are consistently good. Most children start school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress and transfer to Year 1 with most having achieved the early learning goals and a slightly above-average proportion having gained a good level of development.
- School data and its evaluation of children joining the early years classes show that weaker areas of the children's development include their personal, social and emotional development, and also their communication skills. The impact of the school's work on these areas was seen in a Nursery lesson on shapes. Children were encouraged to talk about what they remembered about squares and circles and they became keen to contribute and learn new words and terms about three-dimensional shapes.
- Working relationships between staff and the children and their families are very good. The school is working closely, and successfully, with a local Children's Centre in providing support for families through a 'Getting ready for Nursery' course. The teaching is building on this by providing many opportunities for free play and in the promotion of the children's speech and language development. This is providing a firm foundation for the children and is helping to accelerate their ability to learn.
- All children transferring to the early years benefit from visits by the staff to their pre-school settings. This helps to ensure that children are able to settle rapidly into school routines. Children respond well to the adults, and quickly become positive role models for each other. Children show good involvement in their work, including when working on their own and making choices about their activities. Children learn to take turns, and cooperation between children is good.
- Staff use their assessments and regular observations of children to evaluate well the children's progress, and to plan for their future work. There is good use of gently probing questions to help children to explain their work and ideas, and to promote speaking, listening and observation skills. Adults in the early years are also good at stepping back and observing children to assess the ways they learn and interact with

each other. This is used effectively to plan work for both individuals and various groups of children.

- The teaching of phonics is good in the early years classes. Teaching assistants also play an important role in helping to plan work for the phonics groups for which they are responsible. There is good cooperation between teachers and their assistants, and staff show good professional expertise.
- The early years teachers are particularly aware of the gaps in skills and development between boys and girls when they start at the school. They are paying particular attention to identifying where such gaps are, and in focusing activities which may help to accelerate boys' learning. There is particular attention to using adults' questioning skills to promote and deepen the children's learning and in supporting their play. This, in turn, is enabling increasing challenge for the children.
- Outstanding learning was seen in a Reception Year lesson when the children were taken outside to explore and investigate the school's grounds. Children used their previous experience of exploring the grounds during the different seasons. The memorable learning they had gained from the experience enabled them to make comparisons between an autumn and a winter environment. Children gained much from considering where the bugs they had seen under logs earlier in the term had gone in the cold. They were fascinated by watching and observing the autumn leaves swirling around in the wind. Their knowledge and understanding of the natural world was much enhanced.
- Children's safety, health and general welfare have a suitably high priority. They are kept safe in an environment that stimulates their curiosity and enables them to thrive. The foundations for children's interest in learning are being established firmly in the early years. Children develop as happy and confident learners who enjoy coming to school.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112708
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449582

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	232
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Frost
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0115 9324288
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