

Liss Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115925
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	379172
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Anthony Byrne

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11]
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Pritchard
Headteacher	Andrew Burford
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2009
School address	Hillbrow Road Liss Hampshire GU33 7LQ
Telephone number	01730 892292
Fax number	01730 894831
Email address	info@lissjunior.hants.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 16 lessons taught by nine teachers and met with a representative group of pupils, with governors and with staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including pupils' work from the previous school year, progress tracking, school policies and notes compiled by governors, alongside 94 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Have actions taken to improve achievement in mathematics been effective and is improvement sustained and evident throughout the school?
- Is achievement in English keeping up with the advances made in mathematics?
- In lessons, are the more able pupils set suitably challenging tasks?
- How well integrated are pupils in the unit with those in mainstream?
- How well developed is pupils' awareness of cultural diversity?

Information about the school

Liss Junior School is larger than average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A unit for pupils from the East Hampshire area who have moderate learning difficulties is attached to the school; including these pupils, the school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Fewer pupils than average are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. The school buys in specialist provision for sports and music tuition. A breakfast club run by the school is open daily. The school has gained Enhanced Healthy School status among other awards.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Liss Junior School provides a good quality of education. Issues raised by the previous inspection when the school was judged satisfactory have been thoroughly tackled and good features maintained. Achievement in mathematics is now a notable strength. Most pupils make good progress to reach above average standards in English, and attainment in mathematics is well above average. Teachers' good, detailed planning and assessment ensure mathematics lessons offer stimulating challenge and good pace for all. Challenge for able pupils is stronger in mathematics than in writing and this is borne out by recent test results; although pupils reach above average standards in English, writing is generally weaker than their high standards of reading and speaking. Having worked with external consultants to improve progress in mathematics, the school's own 'improving standards team' is confidently adapting the approach to English. They work with all teachers to accelerate progress so that pupils can achieve well from their starting point. However, this work in English is not yet fully established, for instance assessment of written work is inconsistent in providing pupils with clear guidance on how to improve. It is also the case that while the members of the 'improving standards team' collaborate well with colleagues in setting up strategies, they have little time to check consistency of implementation. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they too benefit from the close tracking of progress and high expectations that are applied to others as well as good support from teaching assistants. Pupils who are placed in the unit for moderate learning difficulties make particularly good progress. These pupils are readily accepted and respected by those in the main school. This is of mutual benefit because it boosts their confidence and their presence commands the tolerance and respect that the school helps all pupils to develop. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their consistently high attendance and good behaviour. They concentrate well in lessons and are responsible and thoughtful of others in keeping noise levels down in class and when they move around in the open-plan building.

Governors have high expectations of the school. Use of detailed progress records to set challenging targets for pupils achieving beyond typically expected levels is a strong feature of management. Intervention to secure those targets by the 'improving standards team' is having some impact. Resources widely used in school and links with schools abroad and in the United Kingdom have extended pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. Governors and senior leaders work well together and self-evaluation is strong. The improving standards team is now operating autonomously and focusing with appropriate ambition on English to improve

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achievement in writing in order to match the higher achievement in mathematics. The school demonstrates good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in written work in English:
 - applying a consistent system of assessment that involves pupils in understanding precisely what they need to do to improve
 - sharing more widely the good practice seen in some lessons in providing stimulating ideas for pupils' writing
 - stretching able pupils to reach their full potential.
- Monitor teaching and learning more regularly to ensure that strategies agreed with the school's 'improving standards team' are being consistently applied.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils begin the school with average attainment and most make good progress to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6, although writing persists in being a relative weakness, particularly in extending higher ability pupils to their full potential. Nevertheless it is clear from looking back at work done over time that pupils now beginning Year 6 made good progress in Year 5. This is also reflected in the books of younger pupils, endorsing the school's demand that pupils 'keep up' right from the start of Year 3, rather than 'catch up' in later years. Some of the best quality writing was seen in subjects such as history and geography when the topic had inspired deep interest, for example when pupils were composing post cards to their twinned school in Africa to find out about it. Pupils were not seen to be as inspired by some writing tasks they undertook in English. Good attitudes to learning and positive relationships with staff ensure pupils respond well at all times. Pupils develop their capacity to work independently when working in small groups or with partners; they collaborate well and stay focused. In this encouraging learning climate the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language speedily settle in and acquire the understanding they need to make good progress. Pupils recollected how much they enjoyed learning activities such as making films and participating in Enterprise Week and they are enjoying researching history projects on computers.

Pupils' personal development thrives alongside learning. They feel safe and at ease in school and know about risks in the world outside. They admit there are a few

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arguments but nothing seriously worries them. In keeping with Enhanced Healthy School status pupils take full advantage of good play space for games and sports and freshly baked bread rolls are popular snacks at playtime. Pupils think about others and respect their rights. They make a very good effort to raise funds on charity day. They have contact with vulnerable groups in the village and contribute to village festivities. As an important part of the village’s future they have contributed to the Village Plan. Their knowledge of the wider world and numeracy skills to serve future economic well-being are better developed than at the previous inspection. They take a lot of pleasure from joining in dance and music.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The mix of age groups in classes works well because teachers frequently set work appropriate to pupils working in small groups based on the progress they have made. Just occasionally more able pupils are held back for instruction when they could have got on by themselves. There is a good deal of movement to different spaces and resources which keeps learning lively. In the majority of lessons seen teaching was good. In an outstanding mathematics lesson the teacher worked with the majority of the class to develop understanding of numbers’ place value, while the most able solved problems in a computer program. After playing a lively team game in the music room that involved standing in the right place according to the value of the number they held, pupils gained great confidence to reinforce that knowledge when

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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writing answers on a worksheet. There is some good practice in English, for instance when a teacher had used a very good range of resources and methods, including film, drama and note-taking, before pupils began writing about a character from a book. Consequently, in this lesson all pupils had ample ideas to support their writing. However, planning and assessment are not as consistently good in English as in mathematics; as a result, pupils are not always fully aware of precisely what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is well designed to provide active and varied learning experiences. Teachers make very good use of the open-plan nature of the building to move groups into different spaces, for instance to use computers or to take advantage of the attractive outdoor space, so that learning has a fluid, active ethos that keeps pupils involved. The link with an external partner to provide sports education works very well as pupils respond enthusiastically to good quality coaching. Participation in music is also a good feature with about a third of pupils receiving individual tuition as well as whole-class experiences. A good range of after-school clubs is on offer and those who come to breakfast club are helped to enjoy extra learning experiences. Pupils take part in trips and visits and have welcomed children from other places by hosting a day for a school from a very different area.

Pupils are well guided and cared for. There is good support for all pupils and especially for those experiencing emotional upsets, or whose family circumstances may render them vulnerable in some way. Attendance is high overall and the school has helped some pupils to achieve much more regular attendance and to improve progress through liaising with the Education Welfare Service and working with parents. Guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who attend the unit, are of particularly high quality and ensure that they make the best of opportunities provided by the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Regular and detailed tracking of pupils' progress shines a spotlight into every class so that individuals and groups can be identified if they are at risk of not meeting their challenging targets. Governors receive regular reports on how well each class is doing so that they can and do challenge on the basis of being well informed. They monitor the implementation of statutory policies and the welfare and safeguarding of

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pupils. Requirements for safeguarding are met well.

The drive to achieve ambitious targets is shared throughout the staff because of the prominence of progress tracking and the intervention of the ‘improving standards team’. This group reviews work and helps colleagues to devise new strategies to remove barriers when progress is slower than the rapid rate demanded. However, the team’s capacity to monitor the success in lessons of agreed approaches is limited by their own involvement in teaching, so that some inconsistency in following through does occur.

The school engages with parents and carers through a mid-year progress meeting and a summer report, open days, newsletters and the website to which regular blogs have recently been added. A large majority of parents and carers are very content with the school. However, as questionnaires returned show, a small minority remains unaware of the school’s raised expectations and the ways in which learning has improved. These parents and carers, although few in number, still have some concerns about how their child is progressing and how they can help.

Community cohesion is good. Governors recognise the importance of the school playing a part in village life and alongside that have encouraged the school to plan experiences which broaden pupils’ horizons in respect of other cultures and countries and other places in the United Kingdom. Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are rooted in the values, policies and practices of the school and are particularly well illustrated by the successful integration of the unit pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers have positive views about the school and most are content with their child's experience overall. The inspection team agrees with them. However there is clearly a small minority expressing concerns about various matters. The school maintains a lot of information about pupils' progress and has taken rigorous action to improve; leaders are now aware of the need to ensure that all parents and carers feel fully informed about what is happening.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Liss Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	45	48	51	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	47	48	51	0	0	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	26	48	51	17	18	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	20	53	56	13	14	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	28	52	55	8	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	30	44	47	17	18	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	37	45	48	9	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	43	41	44	5	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	28	48	51	15	16	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	23	43	46	17	18	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	22	47	50	19	20	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	22	23	50	53	7	7	9	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	28	56	59	8	9	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



19 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Liss Junior School, Liss GU33 7LQ

Thank you from the inspection team for welcoming us when we visited the school. Liss Junior is a good school and we could see that you are happy to be there. You try hard to live up to what your teachers expect of you, so your progress in most lessons is good. Great improvements have been made in how you learn mathematics. You make good progress in English too, but your writing, which is not quite as strong as your reading and speaking skills, needs to be even better to keep up with mathematics. Teachers track your progress carefully and whenever there is a sign that you are getting stuck, governors and the headteacher want something to be done about it.

We saw that you treat each other as friends, respect each other's rights and behave responsibly. You make a very positive contribution to village life but are also gaining a view of the wider world through your links with other schools. The school looks after you well and you quite rightly feel safe there. We noticed that in keeping with being an Enhanced Healthy School you do a lot of sport. You eat well too; I joined the big queue for freshly baked buns one playtime – delicious!

Your teachers work together to plan ways of learning that will support your progress. However, once plans are made they need a bit more help to make sure that they are working, especially in improving your written work in English. To help your school become even better we asked governors and staff to see that the following things happen.

- Involve you in improving your writing through very clear guidance in marking about what you need to do to improve.
- Make sure you have lots of ideas about what you want to say in your writing before you begin.
- Expect more of the most capable pupils.
- Find ways of checking that good plans to help you learn are going smoothly and having an effect.

Your school has improved well since the inspection a few years ago. Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely

Tony Byrne
Lead inspector

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