

Ladysmith Junior School

Pretoria Road, Exeter, EX1 2PT

Inspection dates

16–17 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good and have enabled the school to emerge well after a period of substantial change in the staffing of the school.
- Leaders take determined and well-considered action to bring improvement. The relatively new headteacher has raised expectations to quicken pupils' progress and secure their good achievement.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have focused effectively on raising the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching is good and is rapidly strengthening pupils' learning across the school.
- Staff and pupils share encouraging relationships and these promote pupils' good behaviour. The calm learning atmosphere in all classes is also enriching pupils' progress.
- The high level of attendance year on year shows the pupils' love of school. It also reflects the decisive action of school leaders, in partnership with parents and outside agencies, to secure good attendance.
- The school's work in keeping pupils safe and in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding features that underpin the pupils' confidence in learning.
- An increasing number of pupils across the school, including in Year 6, are working at levels higher than might be expected for their age. This shows the pupils' good progress and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always develop the pupils' handwriting skills and secure neatly presented work strongly enough, especially in English.
- Exemplary practice by some teachers is not shared to best effect across the school to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors attended three assemblies. Inspectors looked at learning in 25 lessons, and saw the work of 14 teachers. They were accompanied by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher during most of these visits to lessons. The inspectors also observed the breakfast club.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school’s analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Inspectors examined the school’s systems for checking progress, records of checks on the quality of teaching, and reports of visits to the school made by the local authority.
- The inspectors talked to pupils about their work, and listened to individual pupils from Years 3 and 4 read. They also looked at samples of pupils’ work across a range of subjects and classes, especially writing.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and staff. They also met with pupil members of the school council. Inspectors spoke to individual pupils in lessons and around the school. The lead inspector met with an adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in the 33 online responses to Ofsted’s (Parent View) questionnaire. They also gathered the views of some parents during informal meetings at the school during the inspection. Questionnaires from 24 members of staff were also analysed.
- Inspectors considered the school’s use of primary sports funding.
- Inspectors examined the school’s work in updating procedures for checking pupils’ progress within the new National Curriculum.

Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector
Sally Olford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ladysmith Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after) is slightly below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Before and after-school clubs are held in the school each day, but as they are managed independently from the school they were not included in this inspection.
- The school has experienced a significant amount of staff change, including in senior leadership, since the previous inspection.
- The school is currently led by an acting headteacher.
- The school federated with Ladysmith Infant School in January 2014. Ladysmith Junior School and Ladysmith Infant School continue to be separate schools, but now work closely together. One governing body oversees the work of both schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and move pupils' achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - teachers more consistently developing pupils' handwriting skills and improving the presentation of their work, especially in English
 - using the excellent practice that exists in the school to demonstrate to teachers how to remodel learning activities and enthuse pupils so that they make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has established a shared vision for improvement that has unified the school after a period of staff change.
- The school now sustains a calm learning atmosphere in all classrooms in which a culture of good teaching and behaviour can flourish.
- All those who work at the school have been lifted by the headteacher's encouraging drive to create an effective team approach to leadership. This is evident in the high level of appreciation expressed during interviews with staff and governors and with parents and pupils. Middle leaders as well as senior leaders are now making valuable contributions to school improvement, for example strengthening provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The school's leaders at all levels, including governors, work well together in checking how well the school is doing and rectifying areas for improvement. The school's strong capacity to improve is clearly seen in the pupils' raised achievement, especially in mathematics. It is also evident in the school's improved use of the pupil premium to fund extra adult support for disadvantaged pupils and to ensure their good achievement.
- The headteacher and senior colleagues check the quality of teaching effectively and make good use of staff appraisal and targets for the performance of staff to bring about improvement. With the full support of governors, the headteacher secures a good link between teachers' pay and the quality of learning.
- The local authority has provided good support to leaders since the previous inspection. As a result, and with a rigorous input from the new headteacher this academic year, leaders have secured rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. Much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time, but some of the better teaching practice is not yet shared widely enough to establish more outstanding teaching.
- Leaders and staff ensure that safeguarding of pupils is given the highest priority. Arrangements are highly effective and fully meet statutory requirements.
- Staff rigorously ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and are enabled to achieve equally well. Additional funding is used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs have equal access to the full range of activities provided by the school. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated in school.
- The school provides a well-balanced range of learning activities, which includes the full breadth of National Curriculum subjects. It includes an effective focus on developing the pupils' reading, literacy and numeracy skills. Parents are given good information about the curriculum and the way pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school strongly promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, staff provide vibrant displays in all parts of the school, which promote understanding, tolerance and British values. Teachers discuss these issues during assemblies and help pupils to create these displays in lessons. Teachers also extend pupils' understanding by celebrating perseverance when presenting 'Star of the Week' awards and encouraging respect when discussing other faiths such as Sikhism.
- The school uses the new sports funding very effectively and now provides a wider range of activities for pupils. For example, the school currently provides places for 170 pupils to attend extra-curricular clubs, which is a three-fold increase compared to the previous year.
- Staff also use sports funding to purchase resources and to provide training for staff to improve teaching and to raise pupils' skills, health and well-being. These include 'dodger-ball' and 'street-surfing' (skateboarding), which are highly successful in enthusing pupils, especially some who previously lacked confidence to engage in sport. The school also offers increased opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports. As a result, 41% of pupils now represent the school in competitions and this is a four-fold increase over the previous year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have taken careful heed of and fully addressed the issues identified for improvement in the previous inspection and monitoring reports. With good support from the local authority, governors have substantially improved the way they check the work of the school. Governors have undertaken a significant amount of training over recent years and now make more frequent visits to the school to check the quality of provision. They now check data on pupils' progress accurately. These have improved the governors' knowledge of teaching and learning and their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors also demonstrate their diligent commitment to school

improvement through the strategic decisions to federate with the adjacent infant school and appoint an experienced acting headteacher to drive the school forward. Governors receive detailed information about pupils' progress from the headteacher. This enables them to play an effective role in identifying aspects for improvement within the school development plan. Governors fully support the headteacher in setting suitably challenging targets for teachers' performance. They question the headteacher to ensure that good teaching is rewarded and to ensure that any underperformance is dealt with effectively. Governors also question other senior staff carefully, effectively hold the school to account and fully support senior leaders in securing pupils' good achievement and safety. Governors manage finances efficiently. For example, they have taken determined action to ensure that additional funds are used well to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils share extremely strong relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils respond well to the caring support they receive from adults. Pupils also co-operate well by sharing ideas and checking each other's work and as a result, help each other to learn.
- Pupils and parents who spoke to the inspectors and parents who responded to the questionnaire commented about the pupils' improved and now good behaviour. School records also show rapidly reducing numbers of pupils involved in incidents and positive responses to the caring support provided by staff.
- Most pupils are keen to do well, readily give of their best and enjoy learning by finding things out for themselves. The pupils' improved effort when learning in lessons, especially when enthused by stimulating activities, greatly encourages their good progress. Behaviour is not outstanding because on occasion a few pupils are too reliant on close adult support to sustain concentration. At times, pupils' concentration also slips when learning activities do not sustain their interest enough.
- Pupils' continuing above average attendance reflects the diligence of senior staff in working closely with parents and outside agencies to tackle poor attendance. It also illustrates the pupils' joy in coming to school to learn with their friends and their respect for the caring work of staff.
- Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. For example, members of the school council talked proudly about their contributions to the school's tree-planting 'Willow Project' and in gaining more water fountains. Pupils also fulfil other duties well, for example caring for the poultry and rabbits and acting as 'Sports Leaders', helping other pupils.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Without exception, parents who spoke to an inspector and all those who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children are kept safe at school.
- Staff and governors ensure that the school buildings and facilities are very well maintained. Health and security procedures, such as regular fire evacuations, are completed efficiently.
- Staff ensure that exemplary practice, for example in vetting staff and considering risks associated with using school facilities and undertaking visits out of school, fully secures pupils' safety.
- Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and each other safe. For example, they show particularly good understanding when following the school's 'two choice' approach before seeking adult assistance.
- Pupils value the way teachers in all classes regularly seek their views about behaviour and safety. School records of these meetings show that the pupils understand the very effective measures sustained by the school to keep them safe. For example, pupils appreciate that there is always an adult on duty before and after school and during break times to whom they could go if they needed help.
- Pupils state that adults are very willing to talk with them. Pupils also really like and highly value the 'Friendship Bench' where they can go to seek help at break times. Consequently, pupils say that they feel very safe at school, 'because staff like us and treat everyone equally.'
- Pupils demonstrate a very thorough understanding of the different types of bullying that might occur. For example, they talk knowledgeably about verbal and cyber abuse. Pupils are equally clear when talking about e-safety and say that this helps them to feel more confident when using computers.
- The school records show that the school has addressed a few incidents of bullying very effectively earlier this academic year. Pupils say there is no bullying now, 'because things are sorted out quickly.'

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and contributes greatly to pupils' accelerated learning, progress and achievement.
- Very supportive relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves enrich learning and promote their good behaviour in all classes.
- Pupils are learning better this academic year because they are also receiving more specific help, and at an earlier stage.
- The quality of teachers' marking has also improved. Pupils value the guidance they receive about how to improve when teachers mark their work. This is evident in their written responses and quickly corrected work. When questioned, pupils also describe how they check their own and each other's work and help one another to improve.
- Pupils relish the many opportunities to respond to teachers' questions and discuss them further with each other. These enable pupils to help each other to learn and also strongly promote their speaking, listening and social skills. For example, during English in Year 4, the teacher's effective questioning about Roman baths enabled pupils to read texts more incisively. This helped them to challenge their own and others' thinking, improving their progress.
- Teachers adapt learning activities and check on pupils' progress effectively to meet the raised expectations of the new National Curriculum. Teachers and capable teaching assistants also meet regularly to discuss pupils' needs and talk with pupils to obtain their ideas and further quicken their progress. These actions, which include a careful focus on literacy and numeracy, are driving the improved progress that pupils make, especially in mathematics. For example, during mathematics in Year 4, pupils' understanding of negative numbers was significantly advanced as they compared different temperatures experienced across Britain during the winter months. All teachers place an effective emphasis on encouraging pupils to express their ideas when writing and this is successfully extending pupils' ability to write expressively. For example, pupils in Year 6 made good use of their well-developed vocabulary to imaginatively redraft African folk tales. The teaching of pupils' handwriting, securing neatly presented work, especially in English, is less consistent across the classes and results in some pupils not developing their skills well enough, hindering their writing progress.
- Pupils' learning is enriched in all classes because pupils are challenged at the right level by work that not only stimulates their interest, but also promotes self-reflection. For example, during mathematics in Year 6, pupils advanced their understanding of probability by thinking about and then discussing their ideas.
- Occasionally, some pupils lose concentration, when not closely supported by adults or enthused by the activities presented to them, and their learning slows. Even so, all pupils, including the most able, the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs, benefit from effective additional adult support. As a result, learning continues at a good pace and is successful.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- This academic year, strongly led by the new headteacher, staff have improved their teaching and support by addressing differences in pupils' learning needs rigorously. As a result, all pupils achieve well.
- For some time following the previous inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 continued to be above average, but did not always represent good progress for all groups of pupils. For example, while the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6, especially those with special educational needs, dipped in 2014, the attainment of other pupils improved.
- Despite some improvement in teaching, the slower progress of some disadvantaged pupils reflected a previous weakness in the use made of additional funding to lift their achievement. This variation in pupils' progress has now been rectified by teachers identifying and addressing pupils' needs at an earlier stage. Teachers are also more precisely planning the effective use of additional funding and so are now securing good progress for disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils nationally. As a result, school and inspection checks of pupils' developing skills show increasing numbers of pupils across the school, including in Year 6, working at levels higher than might be expected for their age.
- School records of the attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics now show that any gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates in the school are narrowing substantially. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are about the equivalent of one term behind their classmates in these subjects. Compared to other pupils nationally they are about a term ahead and this represents a very positive fourfold improvement.

- The picture of good progress for all groups of pupils is also evident across other year groups in the school. For example, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are also making better progress this year because they are receiving earlier and more effective additional adult support.
- The progress and attainment of the most able pupils have been sustained well in recent years. School checks continue to show that in Year 6 more pupils than found nationally are working at the higher than expected Levels 5 and 6 standards. This is especially the case in mathematics, which has benefited from a strong whole-school focus to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils enjoy reading and standards are rising through the school. Pupils know how to tackle new words by using phonics (the sounds that letters make). They talk knowledgeably about the stories they have read and write detailed book reviews to show their good understanding.
- Pupils are also making better progress and reaching higher levels of skills in writing, in particular when pupils write expressively to record their ideas. Their work reflects their well-developed and wide vocabulary. This is readily evident as pupils talk about their ideas and respond to teachers' questions during classroom discussions. However, not enough attention is given to improving pupils' handwriting. At times, poorly presented work in English conceals the often good quality of their imaginative work.

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

Unique reference number	113081
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	462487

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	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Green
Headteacher	Roy Souter
Date of previous school inspection	30 April–1 May 2015
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