

Carr Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134661
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	381710
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Diane Auton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Brammeier
Headteacher	Mrs J Davies
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Diane Auton
Jean Tarry

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited eight teachers in their classrooms and observed 12 lessons. They listened to pupils read in Key Stage 1 and observed the teaching of letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of the governing body meetings. Parents and carers have not yet responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in sufficient numbers, so their views have not yet been summarised on the Parent View website. However, inspectors reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 108 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views of pupils in Key Stage 2 and those of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs is average. Most pupils are White British, with a very small proportion from other minority ethnic backgrounds, and most speak English as their home language. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

During the period since its last inspection, the school has experienced changes in leadership, with a new headteacher appointed in 2009 and a new assistant headteacher appointed in 2010. There has also been significant staffing turbulence, including personnel changes and long-term, health-related absences; one of the latter is still ongoing.

Since its last inspection, the school has achieved the Green Flag Eco Award. The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club on three days each week during term time.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Achievement has risen significantly since the last inspection. It is continuing to rise because pupils across the school are making good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing has improved in the current year, but pupils' attainment in writing is still below average. This is the main reason why the school is not yet outstanding.
- Good teaching across all the classes contributes well to positive outcomes for pupils. Teachers continuously review and develop their methodology and practice to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met. For example, strategies are currently being developed to improve pupils' language and oral communication skills as this is seen, correctly, to be a key to improving their attainment in writing. This initiative has not yet had time to impact on outcomes for pupils at the end of the key stages.
- Pupils thrive in an environment where every child is known, cared for and valued, and this is helping them to progress well in both their academic and their personal development. They feel extremely safe and secure in school. Their behaviour is good and they are considerate of others. Older pupils frequently act as buddies to younger ones, enhancing the school's supportive 'family' ethos. Pupils work hard in lessons and take a pride in their work and achievements.
- The headteacher, with the support of able senior staff and well-informed governors, provides very effective leadership. She has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on continuous school improvement. The curriculum is interesting and engaging for pupils. Regular and effective monitoring means that the overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, so that it is now consistently good or better across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce the ongoing drive to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in writing, so that their achievement in writing matches their good achievement in reading and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills in their work across all subjects
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always provided with appropriate challenge in all their writing activities
 - developing the school's initiative to improve pupils' speech and language skills.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good and they are quick to say how much they enjoy lessons. They are eager to offer their ideas in discussions, listen carefully to instructions and present their work neatly. They work together well with a partner or in a group. Attainment is now broadly average across the school. This represents a significant improvement since the school's last inspection.

Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels that are well-below expectations for their age, especially in speaking and listening. They settle in quickly and develop interest, curiosity and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils across the school respond well to the good teaching they are given and this is enabling them to approach more challenging tasks with growing confidence. Pupils make rapid progress in reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Daily, well-targeted teaching of letters and the sounds they make is giving pupils the tools they need to move their learning forward. Daily guided reading sessions for older pupils keep up the momentum of improvement across the school. As a result, attainment in reading is average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Attainment in mathematics has risen rapidly over the last two years, partly as a result of a sustained and successful whole-school focus on multiplication skills. Attainment was above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011. The attainment gap between writing and reading is narrowing in the current year, as the rate of pupils' progress in writing has started to pick up, but attainment in writing is still below average across the school. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 prepare carefully for their weekly extended writing task and are learning how to draft, edit and improve their work. This is having a positive impact on their learning and progress. Work in pupils' topic books sometimes shows that their writing is of a lower standard than in their literacy books; the school has identified this discrepancy and is working to address it.

Evidence from the school's assessment data, from lesson observations and from scrutiny of work in pupils' books confirms that pupils in all year groups are making good progress in reading and mathematics and that progress in writing is improving. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities also progress well, as

a result of the well-targeted support the school provides for them. Parents' and carers' responses indicate that they are happy with their children's progress and attainment.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good across the school. Parents and carers, without exception, indicate that they are pleased with the quality of teaching provided for their children. Lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account and the pace of learning is brisk; this is helping pupils to progress well in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Well-trained teaching assistants contribute well to all pupils' learning and progress and particularly to that of pupils with additional needs. Excellent relationships in the classroom mean that pupils are secure and happy and ready to learn.

Mixed-age sets based on attainment levels are used in the daily sessions to teach pupils about letters and the sounds they make, and in the guided reading sessions for older pupils. This strategy is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils of all abilities. Pupils of lower and average ability benefit considerably from small group teaching and the pace of learning is brisk for more-able pupils. The school employs a wide range of strategies to support good learning. Individual learning targets are known and understood by pupils; marking gives good guidance to help them improve their work. Pupils say that they find the 'working walls' in classrooms, which provide prompts and reminders, helpful, and they use them well in lessons.

Teachers' curriculum planning often contributes well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In some of the most effective lessons seen, pupils were encouraged to consider and discuss complex issues. For example, in their topic about the Aztecs, Year 6 pupils were considering the impact of religious beliefs and practices on people's lives. In this well-taught lesson they were enabled to organise the information their reading and internet research had provided and to use it to help them answer key questions about aspects of the Aztecs' religious practices, including human sacrifice. Pupils were reflective in the lesson, responding thoughtfully to effective use of questions and prompts. They showed mature understanding and empathy and listened very well to each other's ideas.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good. The school is highly inclusive and pupils show a sensitive awareness of the individual needs of their peers who are disabled or have special educational needs. They have great trust in the adults in school. They say that school is a safe place and that help is always on hand if they encounter any problems. Peer listeners are used to positive effect and pupils show a good awareness of how they can help and support each other. They have a well-developed understanding of different types of bullying. Pupils were able to explain clearly why they believe that there is very little bullying in the school and that any that may occur is quickly dealt with. Although a small minority of parents and carers express some concerns about bullying, most consider that the school deals effectively with behavioural issues.

The school works effectively in partnership with the parents and carers of potentially vulnerable pupils to help to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils encounter. The well-attended Fun Club provides valuable additional support for pupils at the start and the end of the school day. Attendance has improved rapidly during the past two years and is now in line with the national average figure for primary schools.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is an active and highly strategic leader. She is supported by an effective leadership team. Staff and the governing body wholeheartedly share her firm commitment to continuous improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff at all levels contribute well to helping drive forward improvement initiatives. Constructive monitoring and a well-planned programme of continuous professional development have helped to ensure that the quality of teaching is never less than good. The school chooses and plans appropriate actions for raising attainment and promoting pupils' learning and progress. The information gained from regular and rigorous progress reviews is used well to identify underachievement and to help plan interventions and support where they are needed. Leaders have correctly identified areas for improvement and actions are already under way to address them. For example, the school has now broadened its focus on raising attainment in writing to consider how writing can be promoted more effectively through other areas of the curriculum. The actively involved and well-informed governing body challenges and holds the school to account effectively. All of these factors, together with the skills and talents of leaders and staff, mean that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding through well-managed procedures and through an ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos supports the good promotion of equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement; discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The curriculum is good. Subjects are brought together in topics that are interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. Each new topic is introduced by an opportunity for pupils to consider 'what they already know' and 'what they would love to find out'. Each topic ends with time to reflect. These approaches are embedded in the school's culture and, increasingly, parents and carers are taking up the invitation to join their children in the reflection activities and to add their evaluations to the topic. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and the arts and by a range of after-school activities. A wide range of visitors and visits contributes effectively to promoting pupils' academic, personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand and adhere to the school's code for behaviour. They show an excellent understanding of the sound moral and social values the school promotes. There are many opportunities in lessons and assemblies for them to reflect on and discuss important issues and they show mature and thoughtful attitudes in their discussions.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Carr Mill Primary School, St Helens, WA11 7PQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was a great pleasure for us to meet you all.

We found that Carr Mill is a good school and that it is a happy place for you to learn in and grow together. Your education gets off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. You are well-behaved and polite young people. Your attendance has improved and it is now average – keep up the good work and see if you can make it even better! It was good to see how hard you work, how much you enjoy your lessons and how well you all get on with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you well. They are working very hard, too, to make sure you are well taught and that your topics and lessons are interesting. Because of all this, your learning and progress are good. Special congratulations on the great improvements you are making in your reading and in mathematics.

These are some things we have asked the school's leaders to do, because we think they will help to make your school even better. They are all about helping you to carry on with the improvements you have already started to make in your writing.

- Make sure there are lots of opportunities for you to practise and improve your writing in your topic work.
- Make sure that there is plenty of challenge in the writing activities in topic work for those of you who learn quickly.
- Continue to develop the work they have started this year to help you to achieve good speech and language skills, because this will help you to become confident writers.

You can help with all of this by continuing to be happy, hard-working learners. Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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