

The District CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 104792 |
| Local Authority | St. Helens |
| Inspection number | 355633 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 October 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Diane Auton |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 329 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Susan Baker |
| Headteacher | Mrs Sally Leighton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 May 2008 |
| School address | Patterson Street Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9PZ |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed 13 teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including data about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 54 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in their questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The impact of the school's work on raising attainment, especially in mathematics, and on eliminating inconsistencies between groups and subjects.
- How effectively provision builds on pupils' skills from year to year and how successful the school has been in ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better.
- How effectively the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to progress in their learning and development.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average primary school serves a residential area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from other heritages. The school is resourced by the local authority to provide eight places for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school shares its site with a children's centre; the children's centre is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. The school's Nursery class occupies leased accommodation in the children's centre building. The school experiences higher than usual levels of inward and outward mobility in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Some children, after attending the school's Nursery class, leave at the end of the year to join Reception classes in other local schools; others join the school for the first time at the start of the Reception Year.

A new headteacher came into post in September 2008. Her appointment followed a period of significant disruption to staffing and leadership, noted in the last inspection report. For the past two years, the incidence of staff absence from school has been exceptionally high. This has included long and short-term absences of staff at all levels, including staff with key leadership and management roles in the school.

Since its last inspection the school has successfully renewed its Activemark and the governing body has renewed its accreditation for the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is inclusive and caring, with a strong base in its community and this is reflected in the positive views expressed by parents and carers, pupils and staff during the inspection.

The last inspection noted that staffing disruptions brought about by prolonged staff absences and some weak teaching had slowed the rate at which some pupils learn. During her first two years in post, the effective headteacher has acted decisively to address weaknesses in provision and has taken a systematic approach to supporting improved outcomes for pupils. Ongoing staffing turbulence has not arrested the momentum of the improvement drive, but, inevitably, has slowed its pace. The overall quality of provision remains satisfactory, with a residue of satisfactory teaching alongside an increasing proportion that is good or outstanding. Attainment in mathematics is lower than in English. Mathematics is correctly identified by the school as a priority area for improvement and the school is working to improve the quality of its provision in this subject. Middle leaders have begun to develop their roles to improved effect, although they currently assist with rather than lead or initiate new developments. Further work is needed to ensure an accurate baseline for assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Low attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 was linked to particular issues for the cohort, which included an exceptionally high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment in 2009 had been broadly average overall and above average in English, and this was the third year of an upward trend in attainment.

Pupils are responding positively to the improvements in their school. They understand their learning targets and are keen to do well. Appropriate arrangements are in place to cover current long-term absences and a programme of continuing professional development for staff is supporting school improvement well. There is a strong team ethos, with staff and governors sharing a focus on improvement and a resolve to take the school forward. Improvements in monitoring and review mean that the school's self-evaluation is realistic and accurate. All of these factors mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce the drive to raise the standard of pupils' basic skills, by:
 - improving the overall quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better
 - ensuring that pupils always have adequate opportunities in mathematics lessons to consolidate and build on what they have already learnt.

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- Produce a clear account each year of what children know, understand and can do when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that their progress may be measured with improved accuracy.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management by increasing the contribution of middle leaders to driving improvement forward.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They show interest in their work in lessons and are responsive learners. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group; this is helping them to develop their thinking and to offer their ideas with growing confidence. They are starting to develop improved concentration and study skills. From starting points that are mostly below average on entry to the Nursery class, pupils make satisfactory progress and their overall achievement is satisfactory. During the last school year, progress in reading, writing and mathematics was uneven across subjects and year groups; it was slowest in mathematics. The standard of work in pupils' books was usually satisfactory, rather than good. Attainment seen in lessons and in pupils' current work is improving and pupils are eager to do well and to achieve their challenging targets. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the resourced provision, is satisfactory, as a result of the good provision the school makes for them.

Pupils show a good understanding of issues around healthy living and personal safety. They enjoy taking responsibility as influential school councillors and eco officers. As fund-raisers for charities at home and abroad and when taking part in enterprise projects, they play active roles in managing budgets and working in teams; this and their improving basic skills contribute to equipping them satisfactorily for the next stages in their education. Pupils form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils, parents and carers agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is greatly improved and is now in line with the national average.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

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

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching has improved and this is contributing increasingly well to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Lessons are usually planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account. In some of the more effective lessons seen, pupils were engaged in and stimulated by learning and were being helped to assess their own progress. Although the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing, a significant proportion of teaching is no better than satisfactory. When this is the case, some pupils make slower progress. In some mathematics lessons, in particular, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills. This means that their understanding of concepts is sometimes insecure and teachers are not always effective enough in identifying this. The pace of learning is brisk in the better lessons, but sometimes too slow in others, with pupils spending more time listening to the teacher than in active learning. Use of individual learning targets is helping pupils to understand how well they are doing and marking usually provides them with helpful advice for improvement. Regular assessment systems introduced last year mean that class teachers have an improved overview of progress and this is helping them to identify where extra support is needed. Teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning, especially with those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum has been revised to make it more interesting and relevant for pupils. Imaginative opportunities are increasingly being found for pupils to practise and develop

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their literacy and numeracy skills year-on-year through work across the areas of learning. Although pupils are responding well to this, there has not been time for the new creative curriculum to show an impact on raising their attainment in the basic skills. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and music and to learn a modern foreign language. A satisfactory range of visitors and visits help to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they enjoy full access to learning and social inclusion. The school provides particularly well for a small number of pupils with complex needs, through its effective work with pupils in the resourced provision and through good individual support in class. Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that a number of pupils encounter. The school works supportively with families where there is record of their children's poor attendance. Strategies to improve attendance have been used successfully, so that past problems around low attendance figures have now been resolved. The before- and after-school clubs contribute well to pupils' welfare and care and to their personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has introduced improvements across identified areas of weakness, including assessment, whole-school planning and monitoring practice. This has given a new energy and a clear direction to the drive to raise attainment. A united team ethos is now evident and staff and governors share the headteacher's commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils. Most of the new systems are now securely embedded and working effectively. For example, the introduction of half-termly reviews of progress in each class has improved leaders' overview of how well the school is doing, increasing the school's capacity to ensure the positive impact of its actions to raise attainment. Realistic improvement targets are set out in the school development plan, with appropriate actions identified for raising attainment and improving progress and with well-defined criteria against which to measure success. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and rigorously and this is helping to bring about ongoing improvement. The school's leaders know there is much more still to be achieved. There was not sufficient evidence of the impact of improvements in attainment or progress outcomes for the last school year. However, in lessons seen during the inspection, progress was mostly good; indicating that improved learning is now starting to take place. Middle leaders contribute increasingly to assuring the quality of provision; they have not yet played leading roles in driving improvement initiatives forward, although plans are in place for them to start to do

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so. The supportive governing body is working assiduously to develop its skills and its capacity to hold the school to account.

The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through well-managed procedures and through ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement well. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community, with the church and parish and through a developing international dimension in its curriculum. Good links with the local high school benefit pupils at transition. Partnership with the children's centre helps support extended provision for pupils and enables the school to provide good accommodation for the Nursery class. The school collaborates closely with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below or well below the expected levels for their age. Current information on children's starting points on entry is not as clear as it might be, however, and this reduces precision when their progress is measured. Children make satisfactory progress overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception Year, although some children's attainment is still below average in some of the areas of learning, they have gained very positive attitudes and have become happy, interested learners. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and children are provided with a bright, attractive environment, which supports their learning. The outdoor area in the Reception class is particularly stimulating, with a wide range of well-presented activities. There is an appropriate balance of activities chosen by the children and those led by adults, and children are thereby supported in

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developing the skills that lead to independence. A range of evidence is gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information suitably to plan the next steps in their learning and to meet their individual needs. The setting is effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and the staff forge positive relationships with parents and carers. The setting is satisfactorily led and managed; the staff team work together cooperatively, despite split-site provision. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are good and meet all requirements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

A below average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's satisfactory overall effectiveness. A small number of parents and carers and a small number of pupils raised concerns about behaviour and the school's management of unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team discussed behaviour issues with a group of parents and with two groups of pupils from across the age range, as well as observing behaviour in lessons and around the school. As a result of these investigations, the team found that pupils' behaviour is good and that it is managed well by the staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The District CofE Primary 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 329 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 31 | 57 | 21 | 39 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 29 | 54 | 25 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 13 | 24 | 29 | 54 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 21 | 39 | 22 | 41 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 22 | 41 | 25 | 46 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 23 | 43 | 25 | 46 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 22 | 41 | 28 | 52 | 2 | 4 | 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) | 21 | 39 | 26 | 48 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 17 | 31 | 29 | 54 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 16 | 30 | 23 | 43 | 7 | 13 | 3 | 6 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 17 | 31 | 24 | 44 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 19 | 35 | 24 | 44 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 25 | 46 | 23 | 43 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 |

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 | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



6 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The District CofE Primary School, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9PZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We found that The District is a satisfactory school where many improvements are currently taking place.

Your school is a happy place of learning and you are well-behaved and polite young people. You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your work and you get on well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you well. They have been working hard, too, to make sure your lessons are interesting. The quality of the teaching you are given is improving all the time. You are making satisfactory progress in your learning and now this is starting to speed up to be even better.

Keep up the good work!

There are still some things to do to help to make The District the best school it can possibly be. This is what I have asked the school's leaders to do.

- Keep on improving teaching, especially in mathematics.
- Carry on working together to raise standards and improve the progress you make in English and mathematics.
- Make some improvements in the way they measure children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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