

Great Sankey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111181
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	356875
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2011
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Pennington
Headteacher	Mr James Courtney
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons, taught by 10 teachers, and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including records of pupils' progress and the school improvement plan and policies for securing safeguarding and child protection. The team analysed the questionnaires returned by 121 parents and carers and also evaluated those returned by pupils and staff.

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

- How well all groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 progress and achieve and whether teaching is challenging enough.
- How well assessment is used in guiding planning and involving pupils in raising their attainment.
- How well leadership and management at all levels, including the governing body, impacts on the attainment and progress of pupils.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is low in comparison with the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meal is low and the proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Since the last inspection, changes have been made to the senior management team and some new staff have been appointed. The school has gained recognition as being a Healthy School and has gained the Eco Silver award for its actions to promote amongst pupils an awareness of environmental issues.

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

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving quickly. Good quality care, guidance and support and an effective partnership with parents and carers enable pupils to grow into well behaved and generally mature and confident young people. Academic attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average and rising. From their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which are typical for their age, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and their achievement is satisfactory. However, progress is accelerating and attainment rising rapidly as the impact of good leadership becomes evident. Improvements to provision in the effective Early Years Foundation Stage are having a positive effect upon attainment in Key Stage 1. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is well above average. They say that they feel safe and that they like their teachers and other staff. Strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contribute to good relationships throughout the school. Behaviour is good and most pupils work hard and try their best.

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is satisfactory overall but is improving as new methods and better use of new technology are exploited. Some inconsistencies remain, with differing expectations of some pupils and too much adult-direction in some classes. Whilst higher attaining pupils are now making satisfactory and increasingly good progress, those of just below average attainment do not always achieve as well as they could. This is because the planning in some lessons is not precise enough to meet their needs. The school has recognised these issues and is taking steps to address them. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to take part in all that school offers and progress at a similar satisfactory rate to their classmates. The good curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of additional activities and experiences. Opportunities for pupils to independently apply their literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are in the process of being extended through other subjects although they are not developed enough in mathematics.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's educational direction and together with a dedicated staff team is improving the school at good rate. Staff's expectations for the performance of pupils have risen which is a factor in pupils' accelerating progress. Adaptations to the curriculum have improved the performance of boys and attainment is rising rapidly in writing. Excellent pupil record systems track the progress of pupils and identify individuals at risk of underachieving; increasingly, steps are being taken to support such pupils effectively. Given the rapidly improving progress occurring in the school, the determination of senior leaders to continue raising attainment, and the school's accurate self-evaluation, it has a good capacity to improve further.

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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better to raise attainment and achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - harnessing pupils' ability to independently solve problems and carry out investigations in mathematics
 - strengthening the use of assessment to give pupils a better understanding of how they can improve their work and move up to a higher level
 - providing pupils with opportunities to extend and practise their mathematics skills in other subjects
 - ensuring that planning in all lessons meets the needs of those pupils whose attainment is just below average.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils enjoy learning. They are conscientious and work hard and demonstrate a desire to do well. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils willingly engaged in conversation with their partners in order to solve a variety of word problems demanding the application of different units of measurement and decimal fractions. Information and communication technology is used confidently in some classes in order to secure a better understanding, for example, in Year 5/6, palm-top computers were used by pupils to explain to their classmates how to do different calculations.

Pupils' progress, although satisfactory in recent years, is improving rapidly. Better outcomes in the effective Early Years Foundation Stage are starting to help raise attainment in Key Stage 1. Improvement is also evident in Key Stage 2; data held by the school indicate attainment is on an upward trend. This improvement is the result of strategies to encourage writing and to promote better achievement for some pupils whose attainment is just below average. Attainment in mathematics is average and is held back by a weakness in pupils' ability to solve problems and to carry out investigations. The gap in the achievement of boys and girls has narrowed considerably in recent years because of good adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of boys.

Pupils are sociable and generally confident. Their opinions are valued through the school council and the 'Eco Warriors,' who take steps to highlight the importance of looking after the environment. A good range of opportunities to participate in sports, and initiatives, such as 'Walk to school Wednesday' gives pupils a good understanding of the value of being active. Pupils' good personal development contributes well to their rising academic attainment, and their well above average attendance prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

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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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

Teaching and support staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. Their impact on pupils' learning is improving but some variations remain in aspects of teaching. Differences are apparent in the quality of planning and the needs of some groups of pupils are not consistently met. Whilst marking is generally prompt and at times offers good quality guidance for pupils about how to improve, some pupils are unsure of what they need to do to move from one level to the next. Where teaching is good, pupils are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and to apply their skills of literacy and ICT to independently solve problems. At times, however, pupils are over-directed; where this occurs learning is constrained because pupils cannot fully develop their thinking and expertise, particularly in mathematics. Teaching assistants make a very positive difference to the quality of learning for all pupils and often go well beyond the norm to support pupils, for example, in leading after-school clubs, managing some subject areas and promoting healthy living.

The curriculum is good, with some considerable strengths in aspects of sport and elements of performing and creative arts. Planning is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils with particular gifts and talents. Initiatives to promote an understanding of phonics - a system to help pupils use letters and sounds to read - and to develop writing have benefited pupils' achievement in English. Other initiatives have had a marked impact on the progress of some pupils needing extra

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support in writing. The implementation of a mathematics initiative has enabled some pupils to catch up with their classmates but generally, the teachers' planning in mathematics has not been good enough to enable all pupils to develop a secure enough understanding of some aspects of the subject, in particular investigational skills. Learning is enhanced by a wide and very effectively planned range of educational visits and visitors to school.

Effective support and guidance is provided for all pupils who have emotional or educational needs. The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and productive links with outside agencies from education, health and welfare extend the skills of staff within the school. The quality of support provided by teaching and support staff for pupils with specific behavioural and developmental issues is often of a high quality. The school effectively works with parents and carers to extend learning to the home, to prepare children starting school in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to ease the transition for pupils to secondary school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, pupils, parents and carers and ensures that the school is run efficiently. The restructured management team has a clear picture of how to improve the school. Excellent systems for recording and assessing pupils' progress are increasingly used to tackle any evidence of underachievement. As a result, teaching is improving, progress is accelerating rapidly and attainment is rising, all of which demonstrates the impact of good leadership and management. The governing body is supportive of the school but is not fully engaged in monitoring attainment. Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare are fully implemented with good systems for managing child protection. Partnerships with the local authority, other schools and with other schools in the locality contribute positively to the professional expertise of staff and the experiences of pupils. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling racial discrimination. The school has successfully narrowed the gap in the performance of boys and girls. It is working effectively to reduce any remaining differences in performance. The school is dedicated to encouraging the involvement of parents and carers in the education of their children. Communication is good between the school and home with regular and informative academic reports, a good website and information about what is being learnt in each class. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and they promote community cohesion well. The range of cultures within the school is celebrated

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and initiatives, such as Fair Trade developments and environmental threat successfully raise pupils' awareness of global issues.

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	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

The quality of provision and its effectiveness has improved considerably over the last two years. Children's progress is currently good and they get a good start to their education. At all times the children's welfare is paramount and children learn and play in a safe and secure environment. By the start of Year 1, the proportion reaching the levels expected for their age has increased at a good rate and attainment by the end of reception is now above average. This improvement is relatively recent and only just starting to help raise attainment in Key Stage 1.

Children enjoy working with adults. Staff enable children to learn independently as well as from focused adult-led support. Both indoor and outdoor learning is tailored to meet the needs of children. The teaching of sounds and letters is very effectively organised and well taught; this prepares children well for early reading and writing. As a result, many children have advanced writing skills for their age. The creation of themes underpins much learning and adds meaning to activities. Role play is frequently encouraged to develop the children's social skills and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. Some children were witnessed having intense discussions during their role play about which planet they would like to live on and one commented, 'You can't live on the sun though because it's not a planet, it's a ball of fire!'

Recent improvements in the quality of provision and children's improved progress and achievement demonstrate the good effectiveness of the leadership and management. Assessment is accurate and is used to tailor learning activities to the needs of individuals, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers

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are encouraged to get involved in school and information given prior to starting the Early Years Foundation Stage prepares families well for helping their children. Good quality communication, both formally through diaries of children's progress, called learning journeys, and informally through discussions, keeps parents and carers well informed about how well their children are doing.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Around a third of parents and carers returned their questionnaires. This is broadly average for primary schools nationally. The large majority are very supportive of the school. They state that their children enjoy learning and feel they are cared for well. They rate behaviour highly and feel that their children are given good guidance about how to live safely and healthily. A small minority have some concerns about the progress of their children but there was virtually unanimous support for the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school and the quality of teaching. The inspectors endorse most of the positive comments. Teachers are dedicated and caring and leadership and management are good. Academic attainment is improving with rapidly improving progress, which is building on the good attitudes and willingness to learn of most pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Sankey 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 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 358 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	62	46	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	65	41	34	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	59	49	57	47	3	2	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	50	48	40	9	7	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	68	56	46	38	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	46	60	50	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	41	68	56	0	0	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)	42	35	66	55	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	45	56	46	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	41	62	51	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	39	66	55	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	55	48	40	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	60	45	37	2	2	2	2

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 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 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.

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.



28 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Sankey Primary School, Warrington, WA5 1SB

I spent two very enjoyable days in your school recently. I was impressed by how you are friendly and well behaved and enjoy lessons and playtimes. Your school is satisfactory but improving quickly. An average proportion of you reach levels expected for your age but attainment is rising particularly in writing. This improvement is less obvious in mathematics and there is room for you to do even better. Your headteacher and all staff are working together to help you to do this.

You become confident, well-spoken and happy young people. You have a good understanding of how to live safely and healthily and lots of good friendships are made. Links with other schools are helping you to develop expertise in sport and by learning subjects, such as French, you are developing a good understanding of a culture other than your own.

Part of my job is to work with your school to seek ways of making it even better. I have asked the school to:

- seek ways of raising your attainment, especially in mathematics
- give you a better understanding of how to move from one level of work to the next
- increase opportunities for you to take more responsibility for your learning and to have the confidence to solve problems.
- make sure that those of you are working at the just below average level have work that better matches your needs so that you do even better.

I wish you every success and happiness in future.

Yours sincerely,

David Byrne

Lead Inspector

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