

Upton Heath CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131684
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	362709
Inspection dates	5–6 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr H Ziman
Headteacher	Mrs Paula Moreton
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2007
School address	Upton Lane Upton Heath, Upton-By-Chester Chester, Cheshire CH2 1ED
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Introduction

When Upton Heath CE Primary was last inspected in September 2009, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions to judge its progress.

This inspection, the fourth monitoring inspection, was carried out with no notice by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors observed small group sessions led by teachers and teaching assistants, and visited 17 lessons, taught by 14 teachers and one visiting science specialist. Two visits were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, school councillors and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including that regarding pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and improvement planning. Inspectors also considered the responses from parents and carers to questionnaires issued by the school and from meetings held at the school.

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

- The progress of pupils, especially the more able.
- The quality of teaching, pupils' progress and attainment in writing.
- The use of data from assessment to plan provision to meet pupils' needs.
- The capacity of leaders and managers to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Upton Heath is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Eight pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupil is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The number of pupils on roll has fallen since the inspection in 2009 but the school retains two classes per year group. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.

Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes in the leadership of the school as well as in the teaching and support staff. The diocese and governing body supported the local authority's decision to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) from January 2010. Parents and carers have recently been elected and other representatives have been appointed to form a shadow governing body. The acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher, both initially seconded to the school by the local authority, were appointed to the respective substantive posts in July 2010 and May 2010.

The before- and after-school club, run by an external company, was not inspected.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Upton Heath is now a good school and testament to its motto of 'Learning together'. In the last six months, the pieces of the improvement jigsaw have come together with a markedly positive impact in all aspects of the school's work. Outcomes for pupils, the quality of the provision and the effectiveness of leadership and management are now good. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved to satisfactory with many good features. Parents and carers recognise that the school has turned the corner and, as one wrote, are 'much encouraged by how much progress has been made already and the future plans'.

The school buzzes with activity and pupils are proud to show off their work. Morale is very strong: staff and pupils are brimming with ideas and enthusiastic about taking on new challenges. Attendance is high reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school: 'lessons are fun', 'we like doing our own research' (pupils' comments). Pupils' behaviour is good and often exemplary. Pupils are polite, confident and mature for their age; they organise themselves well and work and play together sensibly. They know how to stay safe and who they can turn to if an issue arises. School councillors know all about the school's safeguarding procedures and the reasons for them. They want to help others and are currently looking to ways to provide playground friendship benches. They are justifiably proud of their success in organising events which, since September, have raised over £5000 for named charities here and overseas. Their work to raise the profile of riding bikes to school and in selling healthy snacks contributed to the school recently gaining Healthy School status.

Attainment, already above average, is on the rise because the overall quality of teaching has strengthened and pupils are making faster and more consistent progress than before. Part of the reason for this is that pupils are now aware of the success criteria for different pieces of work. Older pupils particularly, take these very seriously when reflecting on the quality of their work and that of others. Two other factors are the teachers' higher expectations of what pupils can do and the excitement generated by topics and by practical activities in lessons. Pupils are following up their own interests and challenges in the classroom and at home, especially through the use of the virtual learning platform which has really taken off since its introduction this year. Pupils are benefiting from working in pairs and groups, such as acting out the emotions of characters in stories as a precursor to writing. Gaps in basic knowledge and skills are steadily being plugged, especially in writing, and the more able pupils in all year groups are starting to show what they can do. Of late, there have been several notable examples of pupils' individual talent, initiative and high quality work. Nevertheless, the absence of a structured school approach to developing pupils' abilities to infer, deduce, hypothesise and draw conclusions is limiting

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high performance in reading, writing, mathematics and science. For instance, there is scope to enrich the provision and to up the learning challenge indoors and out to ensure that the youngest children rehearse and apply their growing skills, especially in reading and writing, as part of ongoing activities.

Key to the school's rolling momentum is the strong, determined leadership of the headteacher. With the members of the IEB holding the school firmly to account, she has been highly effective in working with staff, pupils, parents and carers to steer the way forward. She has successfully instigated a change in culture, developed others' management and teaching expertise, and engendered shared accountability. Parents and carers have been kept well updated on the school's progress and their views have been sought on proposed changes. Staff have seen how their actions have led to pupils' improved progress, the enrichment of the curriculum and the rising reputation of the school. Confidence has soared along with a ready willingness to share good practice. All those working in the school appreciate that there is much to do to nail the school's success. Senior leaders know that a shift in priorities is needed to iron out inconsistencies in quality across the curriculum and to widen the school's work in fostering pupils' understanding of other societies and cultures. While subject leaders have a well-founded, general overview of where improvement is needed, they are not always sure of the precise areas where action will make a difference in strengthening teaching, pupils' progress and performance. With effective tracking and monitoring systems giving leaders key data and information about the impact of decisions and actions taken, the school is well placed to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure all pupils achieve their best across the curriculum and to raise standards further in reading, writing, mathematics and science:
 - foster pupils' skills in inferring, deducing, reasoning and problem solving
 - enhance middle leaders' expertise in analysing critically pupils' performance and in identifying where precise action will make a positive difference to pupils' attainment and to the quality of teaching
 - enrich the indoor and outdoor provision for the youngest children to heighten the challenge and scope for individuals to build on their own ideas and to apply their knowledge and skills, especially in reading and writing
 - widen the links with other communities to give pupils a deepening appreciation of how others live.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' personal development has strengthened as a result of changes in how the school works. Pupils' interests have widened with the introduction of clubs – over 150 pupils take part each week. Engagement in learning has heightened because of the greater emphasis now placed on practical activities, and achievement has risen as learning has become more purposeful and motivating. A good example is the detailed manuals compiled by pairs of Year 5 pupils to enable pupils in Years 3 and 4 to use the virtual learning platform. The highly productive collaboration and impressive quality of content are more typical of much older pupils. They also reflect pupils' keenness to do a good job and their clear

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understanding of how to go about it. In all year groups, pupils know their targets and are becoming quite expert in evaluating their own and others' work. Year 4 pupils consulted each other about powerful words to use in their poems and were quick to recognise when others used alliteration, simile and personification. Pupils with particular needs in reading, writing and mathematics are making good strides in catching up through one-to-one sessions, booster and support programmes. Skilful support at key times for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they participate fully, share their ideas and complete tasks with minimal help. They are progressing well.

The standard of presentation of pupils' work has improved considerably of late. Pupils have successfully neatened their handwriting and increased the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation. These now complement the maturity of the content.

Pupils like the fact that their school is no longer 'empty and echoing' but welcoming and vibrant. They take an interest in what is displayed. Year 6 pupils were insistent that their artwork on emotions was exhibited on the walls and floor of the corridor just as they had seen it done at Tate Liverpool.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Strengths in teaching outweigh weaker aspects and overall, teaching is good. Key elements are positive relationships, the frequent use of praise and encouragement,

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marking that tells pupils what they need to do better next time, and careful planning and preparation of learning experiences. Classrooms are well organised to support learning. Teachers are generally pitching the work correctly for different groups of pupils. They are now more aware of how well learning is progressing and are quicker to take action. In a mathematics lesson, for instance, having realised pupils were using relevant strategies but were confused by the recording sheet, the teacher clarified the process and Year 2 pupils then worked at a good, confident pace. Staff are being innovative and creative in their use of the interactive whiteboard, games, challenges, drama, talk partners and outdoor experiences to ensure relevance and purpose for pupils. Some inconsistencies remain in how well new learning is explained and how well skills are modelled. In some lessons, mediocre work is accepted too readily and chances are missed to probe pupils' reasoning.

The curriculum is now more effective in meeting pupils' needs. The introduction of an enquiry based topic approach has linked subjects and prompted research and challenges at school and at home, often involving the whole family. Homework is now also accessible through the virtual learning platform. Staff draw on their personal interests and expertise to teach Spanish and French, as well as to run a plethora of lunchtime and after school clubs. Visiting specialists lead in some sports, science and musical activities and pupils are increasingly taking part in local events, such as the recent exhibition of 'A history of Upton in 100 objects'.

Over the last 12 months particularly, effective systems and good links with other agencies have been established which ensure that the school knows and meets the needs of individuals. Class teachers regularly discuss pupils' progress with senior leaders; targets are agreed and support is tailored to help those pupils who are not doing as well as they should. The learning mentor is assiduous in monitoring pupils' attendance. Unauthorised absence has decreased and classes vie for the best attendance record. The Sunshine Room and Circle of Friends, which provide a safe haven and allow pupils to share concerns and help one another, have become vital cogs in the good support for pupils' emotional well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Upton Heath now runs very smoothly. Effective management and administrative systems operate following a root-and-branch overhaul. Safeguarding is given high priority and procedures now meet statutory requirements. Much good practice has developed, including the weekly safeguarding question for all staff, discussions with pupils about how safe they feel and the comprehensive audit of safeguarding conducted by the headteacher

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and the IEB member responsible for safeguarding. Such attention to fine tuning practice is possible now that those with positions of responsibility understand the implications of their roles, are taking the initiative and working with other staff to bring about improvement. The appointment of experienced staff, along with shared delegation of responsibilities, has been highly influential in changing views and creating a cohesive school family. Having rightly focussed on 'getting things right in-house', the school is now looking to further its links locally and further afield to give pupils a wider perspective of other communities, values and cultures. Middle leaders are proving to be a creative force with burgeoning ideas to develop the curriculum and enable all pupils to get even more out of school. They are seeking advice from consultants and drawing on practice in an outstanding partner school to develop their expertise in driving up standards. They are aware that there are areas to strengthen in using data to pinpoint exactly where action will ensure that individual pupils do the very best they can. A good start has been made in developing pupils' self-assessment of learning and in using lesson studies to share good practice in teaching and learning. Parents and carers have rightly raised the need for the new governing body to build on 'the great work started by the IEB' and to ensure that parents' and carers' views continue to be taken into account. The Chair of the IEB and the headteacher have given a strong lead in opening up communication with parents, carers, staff and pupils. The recent meeting to hear about the school's progress was highly praised by parents and carers, as was the session on progression in multiplication.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision has improved since the last inspection. There are many strong aspects but still some inconsistencies to iron out in the quality of teaching, use of space and level of challenge in the activities provided. Staff have sought and acted on advice from the local authority consultant and introduced effective procedures and practices.

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Prime examples are the increased use of the outdoors, the weekly newsletter for parents and carers, along with ideas and challenges for families to continue topics and ideas at home. Each child's 'My Learning Journey' gives a valuable record of progress with photographs, samples of work and comments, especially in relation to writing. Other aspects of the curriculum are not so well covered and it is not always clear what the content indicates about the child's progress. The introduction of structured sessions in linking letters and sounds has accelerated children's interest and progress in reading and writing. Some children are now writing confidently and independently, such as their own versions of traditional tales or labels on a map, and most are having a go at spelling simple words. They are counting accurately and solving simple mathematical problems. Most children are well on track to start Year 1 with a good grounding in the basic skills. However, there is headroom to ratchet up progress and achievement given that, on starting in the Reception Year, most children show knowledge, skills and understanding at least typical for their age. All children make strong progress in personal, social and emotional development. They know the routines, are highly amenable and confidently choose where they wish to work. They are very willing to share ideas and resources. A group of five boys and girls worked together outside, oblivious of others, building a castle, passing blocks to one another and discussing very maturely how best to create what they wanted.

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	2
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

As this inspection was initially a monitoring inspection, questionnaires were not issued to parents and carers. Consideration was given to the comments and responses from parents and carers to questionnaires issued by the school and from events organised by the school. Reference is made to these views and comments in different sections of this report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



7 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upton Heath CE Primary School, Upton by Chester, CH 2 1ED

I am delighted to tell you that your school no longer requires special measures. I agree with you that it is now a good school! Many congratulations.

Just about everything has changed for the better since my first visit in January 2010. This is because, following Mrs Moreton's strong lead, the staff have tried new ideas and accepted and acted on constructive advice from others. Does this ring any bells? You are doing the same in your lessons and are learning faster. I have always been struck by your interest in learning, your enthusiasm and your creative ideas. Now that your teachers expect you to put these qualities to good use, you are producing far better work. It was pleasing to see pupils in Years 4 and 5 checking to see how their writing met the success criteria and giving each other really helpful comments on what they liked and what could be improved. It was also pleasing to see neat work, joined handwriting and fewer spelling and punctuation mistakes than before. Some of the work you do at school and at home is stunning. It is no surprise that you are winning prizes. Your good ideas also underlie your successful fundraising. I am sure you will raise enough for the friendship benches and will have fun doing it!

I hope you will continue to give your ideas on how to make Upton Heath even better. Here are the things that I have asked Dr Ziman, Mrs Moreton and the staff to do:

- help you to interpret even better what you read, to know how to deal with problems, how to collate information and to see what it might imply. This will boost your learning in reading, writing, mathematics and science
- ensure that subject leaders identify exactly how to help you to do your best in their subject and share good ideas to make lessons the best they can be
- provide really challenging activities indoors and out for the youngest children
- widen links with other communities so that you can appreciate how others live.

Go for it! I know you will help Upton Heath to go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely,

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector

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