

Northwood Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135807
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	385882
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2012
Lead inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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	479
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Marsden
Headteacher	Janet Smith
Date of previous school inspection	No previous inspection
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Sheila O'Keeffe
Doreen Davenport

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 27 lessons taught by 20 teachers, including joint observations with the headteacher. The inspectors also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including development planning, pupils' work, safeguarding arrangements, self-evaluation records, policies and performance data. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection. The inspectors also scrutinised paper questionnaires from 76 parents and carers, 39 staff and 101 pupils.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school was created in a new building in April last year from the amalgamation of two primary schools and a local authority support centre for pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well-above average. Many of these are taught in six specialist designated classes, including specialist classes for language development. In addition, there is a class that offers part-time places for children from across Kirkby with specific learning difficulties and another specialist class that offers short-term placements for children with behavioural needs. The school also provides outreach support to other schools for these kinds of needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school operates its own breakfast and before- and after-school clubs. There is an independently managed children's centre on site, which is subject to a separate inspection. The most recent report for this can be found on the Ofsted website.

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. Pupils, staff, parents and carers are very positive about the school and the way it prepares the pupils for the next stage in their learning. It is not yet outstanding because attainment could be better, there is some satisfactory teaching, and some development planning that is not sufficiently detailed.
- Achievement is good. Attainment on leaving the school in Year 6 is low. Despite this, pupils' progress from their starting points in the Nursery class to when they leave in Year 6 is better than similar pupils nationally and improving rapidly. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good and in many cases outstanding.
- Teaching is good overall, with much that is outstanding. The best teaching is characterised by good pace and challenge, the good use of assessment to help pupils improve their own work, and the use of interesting activities within lessons that capture pupils' imagination and help them to learn. When teaching is less effective, there is insufficient pace and challenge, notably for the more able, pupils' speaking and listening skills are not fully developed, and there are limited opportunities for pupils to work independently. The impact of teaching and the curriculum upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe and enjoy their time in school. The number of bullying incidents is low and dealt with effectively.
- Leadership and management are good. The amalgamation of the predecessor schools has been led very well. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Aspects of subject team planning, however, lack a sharpness of focus to bring about rapid improvement and allow for effective evaluation of impact. Previous good levels of achievement have been maintained throughout the amalgamation and attendance has improved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by ensuring that the quality of learning and progress in all lessons is at least good by:
 - giving all lessons good pace and challenge, especially for the more-able pupils
 - developing all pupils' speaking and listening skills, so that they learn more effectively from adults and each other in lessons
 - sharing the good practice seen in some lessons in the use of assessment guidelines to help pupils understand how to improve their work across all classes.

- Improve leadership and management by bringing a sharper focus to subject leader development plans, so that it is easier to evaluate accurately the impact of actions on outcomes.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are exceptionally low overall compared to those typical for their age, especially in language and personal development. Progress through the Nursery and Reception classes is good because the teachers provide children with a wide range of stimulating activities within the bright and attractive setting. Adults have high expectations, teaching is good, and the children are happy to learn. Particularly effective arrangements are made to develop children's reading and writing skills. These skills are built upon well in Key Stages 1 and 2, but, overall, attainment in reading is still low at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. It is improving rapidly, however, and at a faster rate than nationally and is close to national expectations in current groups in upper Key Stage 2.

Attainment in English and mathematics by the time pupils leave in Year 6 is low overall, but, again, improving rapidly. Inspection evidence and school data show clearly that the vast majority of pupils are making better progress than all pupils nationally, given their starting points. Many are making accelerated progress, especially in English. This is because of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching and stimulating learning environment provided by the school. Consequently, in most lessons, pupils acquire knowledge quickly and securely across different subjects. In lessons and during the extensive range of support activities that focus closely upon pupils' specific learning needs, pupils develop and apply a good range of skills well, including the use of technology. As a result, they are prepared well for the next stage in their learning.

Parents and carers believe their children make good progress and are highly supportive of the way the school meets the often very complex needs of its pupils. Disabled pupils and those with such special educational needs make good and often

outstanding progress because of the additional support they receive from trained behaviour and language specialists in the designated specialist classes. Upon its amalgamation, the school identified that some boys were making less progress than girls, as well as some pupils not known to be eligible for free school meals compared with pupils who were known to be eligible. These gaps have been closed very successfully over the last year and the vast majority of pupils across the school are on track to meet the very challenging targets the school has set.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers believe that teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan the curriculum effectively and provide stimulating activities, often based upon real-life situations. In an outstanding Spanish lesson, for example, pupils recorded their likes and dislikes of various aspects of school life and then charted and explained them in Spanish. The teaching of reading, writing, communication, and mathematics is very efficient and leads to pupils making considerable gains in these areas. The school makes good use of technology to support learning, including the recording of podcasts by pupils, which are available on the school's website.

Data on pupils' progress are used very well in the best lessons to provide appropriate challenge and to help pupils move on in their learning. All pupils have individual learning targets, know them well, and, in the best lessons, are often given assessment guidelines in English and mathematics to help them improve their work without adult support. This practice is not followed consistently in other subjects, however. In the better lessons, working in pairs proves highly effective in supporting the pupils' progress, particularly for those with special educational needs, and also in building qualities of tolerance and cooperation. This is particularly the case in the Forest School activities that place pupils in outdoor learning situations of acceptable risk, which they enjoy and benefit from greatly. Good teaching, therefore, deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding. It teaches them a range of skills in reading, writing, communication, and mathematics that contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural understanding.

The best lessons are characterised by good levels of pace and challenge that sustain pupils' interest. In satisfactory lessons, this element is, however, lacking. Such lessons are less vibrant and more-able pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently. Occasionally, poor speaking and listening routines mean that not all pupils benefit from listening to the contributions of adults or other pupils within the lesson and the paired-learning arrangement is not as effective as it could be.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Any incidents of poor behaviour, of which there are few, are dealt with effectively. Those pupils who have individual behaviour plans are monitored very carefully by staff and they benefit from specialist support programmes. As a result, pupils are typically considerate, respectful, and courteous to staff and to each other around the school. The school has evidence of repeated cases where, because of its intensive and specialist provision, it has had a marked, positive impact upon some pupils' behaviour over a very short period of time. Almost all parents and carers consider

that behaviour is good and several comment very favourably in their survey returns about the improved willingness of their children to learn. The vast majority of pupils agree with this and say they feel safe in school and highly valued. Discussions with pupils revealed that they have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, incidents of racial abuse, bullying of pupils with special educational needs, and bullying by or of minority groups. They consider it is dealt with well by the school on the rare occasions it occurs. Staff operate a comprehensive system of rewards and consequences effectively and discuss the implications of these in 'circle time' and within philosophy lessons. Consequently, the school is a warm, harmonious community that respects pupils' different learning needs.

The school has made good use of partnership working, including the public services, to develop pupils' understanding of the danger of strangers, behaviour in public, and safe or unsafe situations. Many pupils take advantage of the breakfast and before- and after-school clubs to get a healthy start to their day in school and enjoy the additional opportunities provided by the school in sports, e-learning, and the arts, especially music. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The attendance of pupils is broadly average, but has improved rapidly from the levels demonstrated previously within the constituent schools prior to amalgamation. The persistent absenteeism of a small group of pupils has also been tackled vigorously. Overall, levels of persistent absence have been reduced considerably to below schools of a similar type now.

Leadership and management

The experienced headteacher communicates high expectations and ambition for the school consistently and is driving improvement forward with energy and skill. The senior leadership team and governing body demonstrate good practice and exemplify the values of the school. Staff morale is high. The school demonstrates clearly a strong capacity for sustained improvement, as the previous levels of good achievement have been maintained throughout the amalgamation, gaps in the performance of groups have been closed, and attendance has improved rapidly.

The transition from three schools to one has been managed very well, with high-quality staff training programmes, sharing of best practice, and good strategic plans for both the whole school and the newly created governing body. The governing body has been highly involved in supporting and challenging the school, especially over the impact of the designated specialist provision upon whole-school outcomes.

Subject teams have been created and have brought the staff groups from the three schools together very well. However, the school has not developed the planning function of some of these teams fully, with the result that some subject action plans lack a sharpness of focus about what exactly needs to be improved. This means that the evaluation of actions upon outcomes at this level is currently less effective than it could be. Despite this, the school's self-evaluation is accurate, helped by an extensive programme of lesson monitoring by all leaders and managers across the school. Very detailed pupil target-setting procedures and practices for the tracking of individual pupil progress are followed diligently by staff. Very frequent pupil progress

meetings link with the work of the 'Raising Attainment and Leadership Group' to improve achievement effectively. .

Teaching assistants play a vital role in helping both to plan and to deliver schemes of learning. As a result, the new curriculum introduced last year is well structured and adapted to meet pupils' needs. Its strong focus upon literacy and numeracy, use of visits and visitors (including residential experiences), and its promotion of pupils' awareness of the wider world, leads to good achievement and promotes spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. Safeguarding requirements are met well and monitored vigorously. The school demonstrates good practice in the vetting and checking of staff and in site security. The promotion of equal opportunities is effective, with the needs of the many different groups of learners met well. Instances of discrimination are rare and, if encountered, tackled robustly. The school engages well with parents and carers, helped by a programme of family learning, the active parent council, and close links with the on-site children's centre.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



20 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northwood Community Primary School, Kirkby, L33 8XF

Thank you for the warm reception you gave me and the team when we inspected your school recently and for sharing your views with us, both in school and through the questionnaires. You were very friendly and enthusiastic about what you do.

Northwood Community Primary is a good school. You get a good start to your learning in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress there. This progress continues throughout the rest of the school. By the time you leave the school in Year 6, the attainment of most of you is still low, but you have made better levels of progress than similar pupils nationally, so that your achievement is good. Those of you who are disabled or have special educational needs also make good progress, due to the additional support you receive, often in the special classes. Teaching, throughout the school, is good, with some that is outstanding, but also a small amount that is satisfactory. The school looks after you well, you say you feel safe and you, obviously, enjoy being there. Your behaviour is good and your attendance improving. Well done! The range of subjects that you take is good and you say that you like the opportunities provided by the Forest School, visits and many extra clubs and activities provided particularly. Senior leaders have managed the joining together of the three schools last year very successfully and are leading future improvement well.

To make your school even better, I have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to:

- make sure that all your lessons are at least good or better
- provide more detail within some parts of school planning to help the school improve further.

You can help by telling your teachers how best you learn and if you have any problems. I wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Cromey-Hawke
Lead inspector

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