

Litherland Moss Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104875
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	395719
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	Joanne Olsson HMI

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	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Sweeney
Headteacher	Sarah Greer
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson
David Halford

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons led by seven teachers. Two of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited classrooms to observe the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Inspectors observed pupils at play and during lunchtime and listened to them read. Meetings were held with staff, different groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, the local authority and senior leaders and managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' books. In addition, they took into account the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 93 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than that found nationally and none speak English as an additional language. Three times as many pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals compared to most primary schools. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. The school has specially funded provision for pupils who have physical disabilities. Pupils currently receiving this provision are integrated into mainstream classes and work alongside their peers. More pupils move into and out of the school throughout the academic year than in other primary schools. The school meets the government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Almost two-thirds of the teaching staff joined the school at the beginning of this academic year. The school has received Healthy Schools status and the Activemark Award.

The Litherland Moss Children's Centre shares the same site as the school. The school's governing body manages the registered Early Years provision, which is inspected separately. The school also manages out-of-hours childcare provision.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils’ achievement and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is not satisfactory because too many pupils leave Years 2 and 6 with skills and knowledge that are well below the level expected nationally for their age. As a result, pupils are not well equipped for the next stage of their education. Nonetheless, the school has significant strengths in the quality of care it provides for its pupils so they feel safe and enjoy school.
- Pupils’ achievement over time is inadequate and is weakest in writing with almost two thirds not reaching the level expected for their age by the end of Year 6. Higher than average absence levels and inconsistencies in teaching led to pupils achieving lower results in the 2011 National Curriculum tests than at the previous inspection. Pupils’ attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is well below average because too many do not make at least satisfactory progress from their low starting points. Furthermore, too few pupils gain the higher levels in the national tests. Recent improvements to teaching and a whole-school focus on pupil outcomes is resulting in most pupils now making expected progress and a higher proportion making greater gains in their learning. Attainment levels are beginning to rise, although this improvement is fragile because it is not consistent across the school.
- Teaching is satisfactory but there is insufficient good teaching to accelerate pupils’ progress. Nevertheless, it is improving because the headteacher has secured a shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching since the start of the academic year. A whole-school programme for teaching reading and writing is consistently followed, which means gaps in pupils’ learning are beginning to be systematically addressed. However, not all teachers ensure pupils receive sufficient challenge or have opportunities to write at length across the curriculum.

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Absence levels are decreasing year-on-year but a few pupils do not attend school regularly enough.
- The headteacher has steered the school through a turbulent period of staff changes and secured firm foundations for the school's future success. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are satisfactory because it is leading to improvements in pupil outcomes. However, some monitoring activities are infrequent and do not involve all key leaders. Nevertheless, sustained improvements since the beginning of the academic year coupled with accurate self-evaluation signal the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that their attainment at least matches the national average by:
 - ensuring all opportunities to develop children's communication skills are exploited fully in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring pupils have greater opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes in different subjects
 - enabling pupils to extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum
 - improving attendance and punctuality, particularly for those groups of pupils who do not attend school regularly.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better across the school by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils, particularly the more-able, are capable of achieving and providing sufficient challenge to all groups
 - ensuring time is used effectively so pupils have opportunity to work independently and consolidate new learning
 - ensuring learning is purposeful by linking activities to relevant contexts
 - ensuring teachers' marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - ensuring monitoring activities are systematic and involve all key leaders.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge much lower than those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave Reception with lower than average attainment. Their communication skills are particularly low. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is well below average and over time, pupils make inadequate progress because there are gaps in their learning, teaching is inconsistent and also, the previously high absence rates affected their achievement. Pupils' attainment in reading is much closer to the national figure than in writing and mathematics. School data show that attainment is rising in some classes but this improvement is fragile because it is

inconsistent across the school. The inspection findings do not support the wholly positive views of parents and carers who think that their children are making good progress.

Since September 2011, more pupils are making better than expected progress because weaknesses in their reading and writing skills are being addressed systematically. Consequently, pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills are improving and more pupils are using a range of strategies to read and understand texts. However, some older pupils have gaps in their reading skills, which limit their ability to read fluently. Too much learning centres on worksheets which limits opportunities for more varied and interesting work than could better foster independence. Not all pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop literacy skills across the curriculum. Some pupils are unable to write at length for a range of purposes.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including pupils who access the resource provision, make similar progress as their classmates. Although girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attain less well, by the end of Year 6 they make better progress than their peers so achievement gaps are narrowing over time. The more-able pupils, however, do not always make enough progress because they receive insufficient challenge. As a result, too few pupils gain the higher levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Improvements are being secured because the professional development of teachers has been linked to performance management to improve teaching and learning. A whole-school focus on raising teachers' expectations is leading to staff having a shared understanding of effective strategies to improve achievement. Most pupils and all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire say teaching at the school is good; however, the inspection evidence does not support this positive view of teaching and learning.

Teaching observed was effective when teachers used demonstrations to introduce new learning and skilfully asked probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding. Good subject knowledge, particularly in relation to developing early reading skills, contributes well to pupils forming sounds accurately to tackle new words. In Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers' planning generally meets children's needs and interests and resources are used well to promote learning. Although some adults move children's learning on quickly through timely intervention, there are missed opportunities to use talk to develop children's communication skills. However, teaching is not consistently good enough to accelerate progress and help pupils make up for gaps in their learning. For example, teaching is less effective when time is not used well to consolidate learning; there is scant attention to developing independent learning; activities are insufficiently linked to relevant and purposeful contexts and teachers do not routinely provide opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Trusting relationships and respect for adults and each other underpin the positive climate for learning in all classrooms and leads to pupils willingly to sharing their ideas without any fear of getting it wrong. This feature makes a positive contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils work hard and listen carefully and respectfully to each other when sharing their views. This inclusive approach was evident in a Year 3 mathematics lesson when all pupils used sign-language to take part in the class discussion.

The teaching of reading and writing is improving because teachers are focusing more on the small steps pupils need to take to acquire new skills. This approach is effective in meeting the needs of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, in particular those who access the resource-base provision and pupils who have gaps in their learning. These pupils flourish in small teaching groups and benefit from the intensive support they receive from adults. However, this provision does not always meet the needs of the more-able pupils because expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough and reading materials are not carefully matched to their needs.

The quality of marking is variable and there is not a consistent approach to giving pupils detailed feedback to help them improve their work. Sometimes marking is over generous and celebrates work which is not of an acceptable standard. Not all teachers ensure pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve success by the end of the lesson.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a well-ordered and positive environment in which pupils thrive socially and emotionally, and overall, the behaviour and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Concerted efforts to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality are reducing the rate of absence each year. Nonetheless, attendance levels are below the national average for primary schools and a few pupils arrive late to lessons or do not attend school regularly. This hinders the progress they make in their learning.

Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes different types of bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe, and are well aware of the potential dangers of using the internet. They also understand the importance of making moral choices through, for example, topic work on drug and alcohol misuse.

'There are lots of people who help and listen to us' is a typical comment from a pupil, demonstrating their confidence in the adults who care for them to resolve any issues they raise. Pupils know how the school expects them to behave and those who are older understand that unacceptable behaviour hinders progress. They say their lessons are rarely disrupted because this is, 'stealing someone's learning', which they are adamant is wrong. Pupils' behaviour has improved over time; they behave well on a day-to-day basis. High levels of care and the consistent application of the school's behaviour policy have resulted in fewer incidents of misbehaviour. Effective guidance and support for pupils with challenging behaviour is contributing to them managing their behaviour. Consequently, exclusion figures are reducing.

In their response to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers and most pupils express positive views expressed about behaviour and safety, which inspectors endorse.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the school's capacity to improve. The headteacher has successfully gained the commitment of new and existing staff to a shared vision so there is a common sense of purpose and drive to succeed. Although pupils' attainment and attendance levels have declined since the previous inspection, these areas are being tackled with greater vigour. Sustained improvements to teaching since the start of

the school year are contributing to pupils making better progress. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision are becoming more rigorous. For example, following observation of teaching and learning, leaders are setting clear targets for improvement. Professional development is well matched to whole-school priorities and individual needs. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and teachers are held to account for pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, procedures for monitoring these activities are not embedded and not all leaders are involved in carrying them out.

Middle leaders and managers are making an increasingly positive contribution to school improvement by developing aspects of the curriculum and leading staff training. There are appropriate systems in place to ensure provision meets the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those pupils who access the resource base. Members of the governing body have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The level of challenge they provide to senior leaders and managers is increasing because of a stronger focus on pupil outcomes.

Partnerships are effective in supporting pupils' well-being, particularly in relation to improving behaviour. Good links with external agencies and the Children's Centre used to support all pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. The school is at the heart of the community so relationships with parents and carers are very positive. All of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Improved provision for equality of opportunity is narrowing the achievement gaps between different groups of pupils.

The curriculum is appropriately organised to meet the challenges of mixed-age classes. Although improved, the curriculum for reading and writing does not always provide sufficient challenge for the more-able pupils and cross-curricular links are undeveloped. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory because of a whole-school approach to developing pupils' social and emotional well-being. A focus on safety and anti-bullying strategies has increased pupils' empathy with the circumstances of others and allowed them to reflect on moral issues. The school is harmonious and inclusive because all pupils, regardless of their individual needs, feel part of their school community and incidents of harassment are rare. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

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 December 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.



1 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Litherland Moss Primary School, Liverpool, L21 7NW

I write on behalf of the inspectors who visited your school. It was a real pleasure to meet and talk with so many of you. We felt very welcome because you were so friendly and polite. We found out that you are very proud of your school, but your achievement could be better. This means the school has been given a 'notice to improve'. Over the next year, the people in charge of your school will be working hard to make improvements. Other inspectors will visit to see if you are achieving as well as you could be. These are the main things we found out during the inspection.

- Your achievement is unsatisfactory because not enough of you are making rapid enough progress to reach the standard expected for your age. However, you are making better progress since the beginning of the September 2011.
- Your attendance is improving but it is below average. This is because some pupils do not attend school regularly enough.
- You feel safe in school and trust the adults who care for you. You behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. You think that adults deal well with any incidents of bullying.
- Your teachers work hard to make sure you feel safe and happy in lessons. Sometimes they do not always ask you to work hard enough or give you enough opportunities to write at length and for different purposes.

For your learning to get better, we have asked the people in charge of your school to improve teaching so that you make good progress and reach the levels expected for your age in reading, writing and mathematics. You can help by all attending school regularly and continuing to behave well. Please accept our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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