



Inspection report

# Westmorland Primary School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 132121  
LEA Stockport

Inspection number 274818  
Inspection dates 5 and 6 May 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr R Hartley HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Westmorland Drive
School category	Community		Brinnington
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Stockport
			SK5 8HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 406 9403
Number on roll	232	Fax number	0161 406 0944
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr P Scott
Date of previous inspection	May 2003	Headteacher	Mr M Henderson

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	15 June 2005	274818

## Introduction

When Westmorland Primary School was inspected in May 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in May 2005.

### Description of the school

Westmorland Primary School is situated in Brinnington, a large estate on the outskirts of Stockport. There are 232 pupils on roll. The number on roll has reduced steadily in recent years, although the decline has now halted. Almost all the pupils are from white British backgrounds and three speak English as an additional language. There are 43 per cent of the pupils identified as having special educational needs; eight pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. Fifty eight per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average and an increase since the last inspection. The figure reflects the high level of social and economic disadvantage in the community.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Westmorland Primary School has experienced difficulties for a considerable period of time. It opened as a fresh start school in September 2000 on the two sites of the previous Brindale and Maycroft Primary Schools, following a period when the provision gave cause for concern. Despite the fresh start, matters did not improve and the school was placed in special measures. The school has suffered from constant changes in staffing, including four headteachers in the last three years, considerable erosion in staff morale, a lack of confidence from the community, and a failure to raise standards.

However, the appointment of the present substantive headteacher in January 2004 has brought about rapid and substantial improvements. He provides incisive and determined leadership, ably supported by a recently formed senior management team. Staff morale is high and there is a commitment to improvement. Standards are below national averages, and below what they should be, although they are rising, especially in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. The pupils throughout school are beginning to achieve in line with their capabilities due to better teaching, all of which is satisfactory and a significant amount which is good, very good and even excellent. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and they are keen to do well. The curriculum meets national requirements and there is a broad range of additional activities, many of which are supported by parents.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of May 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with the leadership and management, pupils' progress, and raising standards and the quality of teaching. Progress had been limited in all three key issues until the appointment of the present headteacher, since when it has been very good in relation to leadership and management and the quality of teaching and good elsewhere, although standards need to rise further.

### Capacity to improve

The school is now making very good progress. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has set a vigorous pace implementing measures which should ultimately raise standards to levels in line with the pupils' ability. He has been well supported by the governors, local education authority (LEA) and all the staff. A significant factor in the school's success has been the headteacher's astute staff appointments. The rapid turnover has been difficult to manage, but the school now has high calibre teaching and non-teaching staff; of a complement of ten teachers, all but one have been appointed since September 2004. The major tasks of identifying gaps in the pupils' learning, the promotion of the school's partnership with parents and improving the pupils' attitudes to work have

been tackled successfully. Together, these encouraging gains are providing the context for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- continue to raise standards by providing work appropriate to the pupils' different learning needs;
- make provision for the higher attaining pupils;
- extend the role of co-ordinators to identify weaknesses in pupils' subject knowledge and how they should be addressed;
- undertake regular evaluations of the effectiveness of the school's performance.

## Achievement and standards

The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage and this continues throughout Key Stage 1. Many of the children enter school with a limited range of skills and educational experiences although by the end of Year 2 many of them show encouraging signs of reaching levels broadly in line with the expectations for their age.

Standards of attainment in the 2004 national tests at both key stages reflected the powerful effect of the general instability experienced by the school over a number of years, particularly the wide variations in the quality of teaching, staff turbulence and frequent changes in leadership. There are pupils in Year 6 who have spent their entire school education against a backdrop of mediocre provision. Progress over time has been disappointing; at times pupils have made headway only to slip back because of frequent changes in teaching personnel and teaching which has been lacklustre. As a consequence, gaps in learning have appeared which have only recently begun to be successfully addressed.

The school's 2004 national test results, not surprisingly, were poor overall. At Key Stage 1 they were weak when set against national figures, and in comparison to similar schools they were below average especially in reading and mathematics. As a result of the generally good teaching in Years 5 and 6, the Key Stage 2 results showed improvement in mathematics and science. However, longstanding weaknesses in how reading and writing have been taught, and infrequent opportunities for the pupils to develop their communication skills could not be redressed sufficiently to bring about a similar improvement in the English results.

Standards of attainment in lessons paint an encouraging picture. Over the last 12 months they have edged up, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes, where the legacy of indifferent provision has been less widespread. Overall, most improvement

has been made in the core subjects, although standards in art and in some music lessons are satisfactory, and at times good. The school is well aware that, despite recent improvements, standards remain too low, and has set in place a detailed programme to boost the pupils' attainment.

## Personal development

When the school was inspected in May 2003, many pupils showed disaffection towards their work, and there were examples of unacceptable behaviour, especially when the work was dry and unappealing. These issues were largely responsible for the slow pace of learning and contributed towards the pupils' fragmented curriculum knowledge. Now, the pupils display good attitudes overall to their work. They are attentive, enjoy taking part in lessons, concentrate for lengthy periods, and are generally keen to do well. They respond well to the teachers' efforts to present interesting tasks, and they move from one section of a lesson to another without fuss. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good. They show respect for each other and adults, and know the established routines. Attendance has risen slightly and is now 93.2 per cent, and punctuality is much improved, which reflects the school's efforts to promote good work habits and forge better links with parents.

The pupils' social and moral education is developed well, while their spiritual and cultural education is satisfactory. There is a strong ethos developing in the school, often through vibrant and appealing assemblies, which promote responsibility and standing up for what is right and knowing what is wrong. A good range of clubs and special events are well attended, and the pupils are becoming increasingly aware of their place in the local community. The school staff have worked hard to draw parents into school-life and there is a healthy response to initiatives such as coffee mornings, parent workshops, curriculum-themed events, and general open days.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has shown improvement over the last year. There was no unsatisfactory teaching; it was satisfactory in nine lessons, good in six, very good in two, and excellent in one. These figures are impressive when set against the challenging context 12 months ago of temporary appointments, teachers on long-term absence and some entrenched resistance to change, a consequence of which was a high absence rate. The headteacher can take much of the credit for the current buoyant position; morale is high and there is a commitment to improvement. There is cohesion and consistency in the teachers' work. Their lessons are planned thoroughly, learning objectives are shared with the pupils and the tasks are well judged according to the needs of most pupils. Occasionally the need to provide work to sustain the average and below-average attaining pupils, and attend to the legacy of gaps in the pupils' learning, has been at the expense of setting sufficient challenge for the higher-attaining pupils. The considerable number of teaching assistants make important contributions to lessons and to teaching small groups for additional support in English and mathematics.

The school is establishing a thorough system for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The recently appointed co-ordinator has analysed the information from tests and assessments and identified aspects of work which are priorities for improvement; for example, in English and mathematics. The senior management team and LEA have also introduced measures to raise each teacher's ability to make accurate assessments and check the standards achieved in age groups other than their own.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and based on national requirements. Proper emphasis is paid to pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and to developing their investigative skills in science. A growing strength in the school is its approach to identifying ways of promoting basic skills across a broad range of subjects, as part of a general strategy to improve the pupils' response to their learning.

The school's provision for special educational needs is now soundly based, after a period of instability. These pupils are making progress and an encouraging number have made sufficient progress to be removed from the list of pupils with special educational needs, or they have placed in a lower category of need.

## Leadership and management

The difficulties experienced at Westmorland Primary School have been longstanding and relate largely, although not exclusively, to changes in staff, especially at the most senior level. There have been four headteachers in the last three years, mostly for short periods. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2004 and is providing very good leadership and management. Despite the school's entrenched problems, the headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and embarked on a broad raft of improvement measures. For most of the time, he has not had the benefit of a stable senior management team and has had to contend with protracted staffing difficulties, and yet he has managed to sustain and refine changes that have brought rapid gains. He has raised staff morale, improved links with parents, and encouraged a learning environment in which pupils' can give of their best.

The headteacher is now being supported by a good senior management team. Its individual qualities and expertise work well both corporately and independently, and there is a strong sense of purpose in its work. Co-ordinators for subject and aspects, such as assessment, have clear roles, and have established actions to bring about improvement. Most of the initiatives are recent. However, despite some successes, there are still important steps to be made; for example, the school does not yet have a clear view about how co-ordinators could help teachers reduce the gaps in the pupils' learning.

The headteacher and senior management team undertake a range of monitoring procedures. The school's strategic plans are soundly based although there are no regular evaluations of the overall effectiveness of the school's performance. The LEA and governing body have played an important part in the school's improvement through support for the headteacher's initiatives, providing frequent professional dialogue and displaying a firm commitment to appointing teachers of high calibre.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Westmorland Primary School opened as a fresh start school in September 2000 and was visited by HMI in March, June and November 2001 and in November 2002 to evaluate the progress being made and the quality of education provided. It was inspected by HMI in May 2003 under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in December 2003, and in March, July and December 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of May 2003.

In May 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit 18 parts of lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. A sample of pupils' writing over the year was also examined. Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior teachers, representatives from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about HMI-led Ofsted inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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