



Mount Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104993
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277270
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Carole McBride CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mount Pleasant Road
School category	Community		Wallasey
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Merseyside CH45 5HE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6303329
Number on roll	297	Fax number	0151 6301462
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs A Hardy
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sue Talbot

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a bigger than average sized primary school in a residential area of mixed socio economic advantage. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. An average number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but their needs cover a wide range, and more have statements of special educational needs (SEN) than in other schools of this type. There were periods of staff absence between 2003 and 2005, which depleted the capacity of the senior management team. The school moved to its present site in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features; the school's own evaluation is very close to this view. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory; it enables pupils to make steady progress in the Reception class and attain standards that are average for their age. In the infant and junior classes, this pace of progress continues for the majority, but higher attainers could do better in writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Teaching is satisfactory overall; pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well but the school has correctly identified that there is scope for improvement in the pace and quality of lessons, and in the challenge offered to more able pupils. A good start has been made in addressing this underachievement, but there is still more to do. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory but it needs to include more opportunities for pupils to use their creativity. This is a caring community where pupils' personal development is fostered well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong; this leads to good behaviour and a positive atmosphere for learning. Since the last inspection, the school's rate of development has been hampered by the absence of key staff depleting the capacity of the senior management team. These issues are now being successfully addressed. Although the headteacher is giving a good steer to the work of the school, the impact of teaching on pupils' progress needs to be given a sharper eye. The school offers satisfactory value for money and has a sound capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has already identified and inspection judgements confirm that in order to build on its strengths and improve standards it should:

- improve the quality of teaching in writing and mathematics especially for higher attainers
- enrich the quality of the curriculum to increase pupils' enjoyment and use their creativity
- improve the quality of leadership and management so that there is a greater input into school development initiatives by teachers with key responsibilities and monitoring and evaluation activities focus more sharply on the outcomes of teaching for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Across the school, achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average but covers the full span; the significant minority of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is balanced by an equal number of higher attainers. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and reach the standards expected for their age in the Reception class. By Years 2 and 6, most pupils reach average standards and there is no significant difference between the achievement

of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress in developing confidence and basic skills. The school has accurately pinpointed a small number of more able pupils for whom standards in writing and mathematics could be higher; teaching does not always stretch them as far as they could go. National tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6 show that standards have slipped slightly in the last two years with fewer pupils achieving higher than average levels. The absence of key staff in the last two years, resulting in a depleted senior management team, meant that the capacity to track pupil progress rigorously was impaired. This situation has been addressed and the school has developed a way of identifying pupils who are underachieving in writing and mathematics; action being taken to boost their achievement is proving successful. There is a richer variety of activities to stimulate pupils' ideas for writing and the most able mathematicians are given harder challenges. More still needs to be done, however, to ensure that these improvements are sustained.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. The high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils leads to very good behaviour and a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils are encouraged to make a good contribution to the school and wider community and they respond extremely well to opportunities to show initiative or take on responsibility. The active school council reflects the views of other pupils well. They are given plenty of scope to suggest ideas and follow them up; they take a great pride in what they do. Pupils' social development is good; they respect and care for one another and listen to what everyone has to say. When new pupils join the school, they are helped to understand the rules and routines by their classmates.

The school's strong emphasis on promoting pupils' well-being, gives them a good understanding of what they need to do to stay safe and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils can readily talk about healthy eating and there is a good take up of after school sports clubs and activities. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the playground initiatives, which support their physical and social development. Many pupils have a sound awareness of a spiritual dimension to life but need more time for reflection. They know basic facts about different religions and faith traditions, but there is scope for improvement in their awareness of the cultural diversity of modern British society.

Pupils are equipped with basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), giving them a good foundation for their future. Attendance is in line with the national average and pupils are on time for school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; this represents a downturn since the last inspection when it was judged to be very good. In the interim, the school has followed national initiatives in literacy and numeracy lesson planning, but has not used them flexibly enough to meet the needs of its pupils. A recently revised approach to the teaching of writing is steadily improving matters and pupils are more motivated by using a wider range of resources, such as computers and digital cameras, to build storylines and spark creative ideas. Most lessons have good features; very good use is made of ICT for example, to interest and motivate pupils. However, not enough teaching allows pupils to spread their wings, try things out and experiment for themselves. Teachers over direct pupils' work by telling them too precisely what to do and how to do it; for example, by prescribing methods of recording work too closely. More precise assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are helping teachers to recognise which pupils need an extra boost and to set higher expectations, especially in mathematics, reading and writing. A small amount of teaching is of inadequate quality; lessons proceed at too slow a pace, pupils are restless and bored and make too few gains in knowledge or skills.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well; much is expected of them and they rise to the challenge. The good quality support and instruction by teaching assistants ensures that these pupils make the most of lessons, often tackling work of similar difficulty to the rest of the class, but approaching it from a different angle.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is of sound quality. Sufficient attention is given to developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, but it is largely uninspiring and it offers too little scope for pupils to think creatively, experiment or develop their ideas. The school has started to plan with more flair and imagination so that pupils' make connections in their learning between different subjects; this needs to be taken further so that there is more opportunity for all pupils to do things for themselves, and for more able pupils to forge ahead. It is no coincidence that pupils cite ICT as their favourite lesson; the ICT curriculum is interesting and lessons are planned so that pupils spend most of their time working on computers.

Good progress made by lower attainers and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reflect the success of the school's support arrangements for them. Higher attaining mathematicians did not do as well as expected last year because extra support to boost their achievement was cut back owing to staff absence.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences and enjoy social activities through after school clubs. This raises their self-esteem and

confidence; questionnaires and discussions with pupils reveal the strong values that they place on this aspect of school life. Opportunities to learn about health and safety, including substance misuse, are good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The adults who work in the school are skilled in supporting and caring for the pupils. Child protection procedures are in place and vulnerable children who are at risk, for any reason, are quickly identified and supported. The school's effective links with outside agencies is a strong factor in the good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils say they feel safe and happy, and are free from bullying, especially since the recent review of the schools anti-bullying arrangements. They trust the adults who work with them and know where to turn to for help; consequently children are happy to come to school. There are good arrangements for health and safety. Individual medical and welfare needs are particularly well dealt with.

Parents and carers express overwhelmingly positive views about the school. They have good relationships with the teachers and this benefits their children's education. Arrangements for settling new pupils into school and to transfer between classes are satisfactory. Teachers give satisfactory support to pupils in lessons, but there is more to be done in showing them how to improve their work and learning further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are of sound quality. The headteacher leads and manages the school well; she has a keen eye for what is needed to achieve the vision set by herself and the governors, and she is the driving force behind many initiatives. The school's development since the last inspection has been blunted, however, by the absence of key post holders and insufficient influence on curriculum development by other staff. Although the headteacher and governors are addressing these issues successfully, an even stronger input from other key staff is necessary to maintain the pace of change. The rate of improvement is most marked where staff have taken on intensive training, such as in ICT; this has paid off in greatly improving teachers' skills and has made a marked difference to the quality of teaching and learning.

The headteacher's evaluation is very astute; it portrays the school's strengths and weaknesses with great accuracy. The school development plan reflects a pursuit of relevant priorities and attention to the most important shortcomings. Tracking of pupils' progress, for example, is now being taken forward well and the impact on pupils' progress is rapidly being felt. This is also effectively linked to performance management of staff, so that pupils' targets are set alongside the professional objectives agreed with teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning however, are still not sufficiently rigorous. Lesson observations by key staff include too few sharp judgements about the impact of teaching when weighed against what pupils have learned.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are extremely supportive of the school's work. Under the able leadership of their recently appointed chair, they have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. They are beginning to use this effectively and are starting to act with determination to address difficult issues.

Good use is made of the school's excellent facilities; staff and pupils all take great pride in looking after the buildings and outdoor areas. This school rises well to the challenge of admitting increasing numbers of pupils with a wide range of learning and medical needs and creates a secure environment in which they thrive.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. It was good to see how much you enjoy your new building and everything it has to offer. We would like to share with you what we thought.

These are some of the things that we enjoyed:

- we really liked our chats with you
- your behaviour is very good - keep it up
- yours is an active and healthy school
- there are plenty of clubs for you to join in after school
- you are very well cared for by the teachers and other staff.

We know everyone wants to do even better and we have suggested a few things that we think will help:

- we would like your teachers to help those who are especially good at writing or mathematics to do even better
- we would like your teachers to look even more closely at lessons to decide if you are learning fast enough, and also how they could make learning more interesting for you
- your headteacher needs all the other teachers to help her more in making improvements so that Mount Primary will become an even better school.