



Carr Mill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134661
LEA St. Helens
Inspection number 282635
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael McIlroy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kentmere Avenue
School category	Community		0
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		0, St Helens WA11 7PQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 678223
Number on roll	276	Fax number	01744 678220
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Brammeier
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs A Tobin

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school was formed in 2004 following an amalgamation of an infant and a junior school. It is above average in size and serves an area that experiences twice the level of social disadvantage that is found nationally. Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for a free school meal, which is well above average. A quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. Several have a statement of special educational need. Almost all pupils are of White British origin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has some good features.

In the year following its successful amalgamation, the school focused on creating a positive climate for learning. As such, the personal development and well-being of pupils are good overall. Behaviour is generally good but attendance is below average.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their learning. They enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge that are below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, particularly in the areas of language and social development. Pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 1.

In 2005, pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly the more able, did not achieve as well as they could have. In the school's first set of national test results, standards were well below average, particularly in mathematics. A number of factors associated with the creation of the new school contributed to these weak results: learning was disrupted by building work and there was discontinuity in staffing. Since then, the school has focused sharply on raising standards and on improving provision for the more able. Results have risen at Key Stage 1 and currently pupils are making better progress in Key Stage 2.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some is good. The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are adequate. The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features but does not yet meet the needs of the more able. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher provides good leadership and is strongly focused on raising standards. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not robust enough. Middle management is satisfactory and governance is good. Good links exist with parents and other agencies. Parents are pleased with, and very supportive of, the new school.

The school provides satisfactory value for money and has adequate capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Provide more challenge for more able pupils.
- Make the monitoring of teaching and learning more robust.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with levels of learning and skills that are below average. The good care and teaching they receive, and an effective mix of child-led and teacher initiated activities, ensure they make good progress in the Foundation Stage. A majority of pupils are well on their way towards achieving their early learning goals. In 2005, pupils in Key Stage 1 achieved

overall results which were just below average. In the most recent assessments, standards improved strongly in reading and in writing, although they dipped slightly in mathematics. This represents good progress given the pupils' low starting point on entry to the school.

In Key Stage 2, standards in 2005 were well below average overall. Standards were particularly weak in mathematics, where less than half of pupils achieved the expected level. Too many pupils, particularly the more able, made progress which was significantly below average. Disruption to learning due to extensive building work at the former junior school, discontinuity in staffing caused by the uncertainties of amalgamation and a lack of challenge for the more able contributed to these weak results. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made satisfactory progress.

In the last year, the school has taken significant steps to improve standards, particularly in mathematics and writing. Provision for the more able pupils has also been extended. These initiatives are beginning to bear fruit. Inspection evidence and data provided by the school show that Key Stage 2 pupils are making better progress and suggest that standards, especially in mathematics, are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school judges the personal development and well-being of pupils to be good and inspectors agree. Spiritual development is promoted through carefully planned assemblies, where pupils are able to reflect on the wonders of the world. Moral and social development is strongly fostered through the school's 'golden rules' and specific lessons where pupils can share their views. Visits to places of worship and displays about different religions and societies develop their cultural understanding.

Pupils enjoy school and are proud of their new surroundings. They speak highly of the wide range of clubs and participation rates in these are high. Pupils are caring and considerate to one another and courteous to visitors.

Behaviour is generally good. Pupils move sensibly around the school and play safely in the playground. Pupils feel safe at school. They are clear about whom they can approach in the event of any instances of bullying or racism. They understand the dangers presented by hazardous substances and appreciate the benefits of healthy eating. Attendance is a little below average but the school has made strenuous efforts to improve this through weekly monitoring, attendance certificates and a system which responds to first day absence. A learning mentor works closely with targeted families. Holidays during term time are actively discouraged.

Pupils have good opportunities to exercise responsibility. The elected school council suggests ways to improve the school, such as the 'fruit tuck shop,' which pupils run. Others are trained 'peer mentors' and help solve minor problems in the playground. Pupils make positive contributions to the community through fundraising for charities, such as the local hospice. Older pupils have improved the environment through involvement in hedgerow planting at the nearby Carr Mill Dam.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's assessment that teaching is satisfactory overall is accurate. Where teaching is good the pace of learning is brisk and work is challenging and matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils are provided with interesting and exciting learning experiences, which stimulate their imagination, hold their attention and enable them to make good progress. An example of this was a literacy lesson in the Foundation Stage where pupils examined caterpillars with magnifying glasses, chatted enthusiastically and wrote freely about the lifecycle of the butterfly.

In otherwise satisfactory teaching, time is not always well used and the pace of learning is slower. Teachers talk for too long and this causes pupils to lose interest. On occasion, some pupils are not kept on task. There is insufficient challenge for more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, due to the good support provided by skilled learning assistants.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning, although on occasion their attention wanders when teaching is dull. Planning is mostly satisfactory. Assessment information is used to set targets and is well used in some classes to match work closely to pupils' abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. It is broad and meets statutory requirements. There is an appropriate recent focus on mathematics and writing. Information and communication technology (ICT) is developed through the new ICT suite. In the Foundation Stage, imaginative outdoor provision and structured play effectively promote learning and pupils' language skills and social development in particular. The needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met and they have good opportunities to make progress. Their literacy skills and confidence as learners are strongly developed through working in small groups with learning assistants. German is taught in a number of classes. However, whilst the school has increased provision for more able pupils, the curriculum is not yet fully meeting their needs.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as netball, gardening and homework clubs. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential trip. Learning is enriched by visits from musicians and artists and trips are organised to museums and the local library.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support which pupils receive are satisfactory overall. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in

their learning and are fully integrated into school life by the learning mentor and learning assistants. Parents hold the school's work with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities in high regard. Those with behavioural problems are also well supported.

Clear policies are in place to ensure the health and safety of learners and are reviewed regularly. Child protection procedures are robust. Healthy lifestyles and eating are strongly promoted through prominent displays. Appropriate guidance is given about the dangers of hazardous substances. Pupils are well supervised in and around school. Effective procedures exist for the smooth induction of new pupils. Older pupils are well prepared for the transfer to secondary school.

There is a new system to track the progress of pupils, although this is in the early stages of development. Pupils receive targets in the core subjects. However, not all know their targets clearly. Marking is satisfactory but it does not always give pupils enough information on the next steps to take to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall.

The school has been successful in its recent amalgamation. Parents and pupils are pleased with the new school. In the first year of the school's life, the senior leadership of the school worked very hard to successfully establish a positive climate for learning, based firmly on the principles of Every Child Matters and the school's 'golden rules'. This is reflected in the good personal development and well-being of pupils and their positive attitudes to learning. The headteacher also was required to devote much time to establishing the numerous structures and policies required for a new school. This impeded the school's progress in improving standards in learning and last year the school did not meet its challenging targets.

The acting headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction for the school. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is satisfactory. She is appropriately and relentlessly focused on the need to raise standards in teaching and learning. Expectations of the progress pupils should make have been raised. Following the weak results in 2005, a considerable number of initiatives were launched to drive up standards. Many of these, such as the emphasis on 'problem solving', are rightly focused on mathematics. Others are designed to provide more challenge for the more able. These are starting to have an impact on learning and standards. A system for the monitoring of teaching and learning has been introduced, but it is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that weaknesses in teaching are remedied. There is a new whole school system to track pupils' performance but this is still in the early stages of development.

Middle management at the school is satisfactory. The Foundation Stage manager and the coordinator for special educational needs provide good leadership. Subject managers have a sound understanding of the major strengths and weaknesses in their

subjects. They are developing their knowledge of the key stage with which they are unfamiliar. Some are beginning to have an impact on standards.

Good links have been forged with parents, partly through courses such as the family numeracy project, which also benefits pupils' learning. Parents are consulted about school developments, although some would like more information on the school. Pupils, too, have been involved in the school's development. The new logo was designed by a pupil. Others designed decorative metalwork which adorns the building.

Governance is good. Governors acutely understand and support the school's recent drive to raise standards. They offer support and challenge to the school's leadership.

The school has adequate capacity to improve and offers satisfactory value for money.

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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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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	3	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	2	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	3	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?	3	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	2	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 for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found. These are some of the best things which we saw.

- Your behaviour is generally good.
- Your new school has been successfully created.
- The acting headteacher leads your school well.
- You are kind and caring to each other and polite to visitors.
- You have a good range of clubs to take part in.
- You have a very good school council.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to change some things in order to make things better for you at the school. These are:

- to make sure older pupils do better in English, science and especially mathematics
- to make all teaching as good as the best which we saw
- to provide harder work for some of you
- to make more frequent checks that all of you are learning as well as you should be.

Once again, many thanks for your politeness and help when we visited your school.