



Thomas Gray Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134785
LEA Sefton
Inspection number 282691
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Ian Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Chestnut Grove |
| School category | Community | | Bootle |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | | Liverpool L20 4LX |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0151 922 3723 |
| Number on roll | 345 | Fax number | 0151 922 2446 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Rev R Drive |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable | Headteacher | Mr R Potter |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school was formed by the recent amalgamation of two smaller schools. It serves an area of severe social and economic deprivation. Eligibility for free school meals is much higher than usual. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is well above average. No pupil has a statement of special educational need.

The school is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ), a group of schools that receives additional support from the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's view that it provides a good quality of education. The school's evaluation of all aspects of its work as good matches inspection findings except that, because of the large budget surplus, inspectors judge value for money to be satisfactory.

Good care guidance and support help pupils to achieve well as they move through the school. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good so that pupils make good progress, particularly in social development, and are well prepared for their life in the school. The school builds on this progress effectively, making excellent use of its links with other agencies, so that pupils' personal development is good. Standards at the end of Year 2 are well below average and at the end of Year 6 are below average, but represent good achievement in relation to pupils' starting points.

Good teaching and learning, underpinned by rigorous evaluation of performance at all levels of management and good arrangements for professional development, promote good progress. Teachers make good use of the sensitive and efficient support provided by classroom assistants. In an otherwise positive picture, higher attaining pupils are not consistently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to make good progress.

Leadership and management are good. The amalgamation of two schools is being managed well and good leadership is developing a common sense of purpose. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Despite the school's efforts and a range of initiatives, attendance continues to be unsatisfactory with a higher than average proportion of unauthorised absence.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- continuing efforts to raise attendance particularly by tackling unauthorised absences
- ensuring that higher attaining pupils are consistently challenged.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence confirms the school's judgement that pupils' achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards, particularly in communication, language and literacy. A substantial minority show difficulties in personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage but nevertheless standards of literacy and numeracy remain well below average at the beginning of Year 1. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2005 were well below average overall. Girls did better than boys. Results at the end of Year 6 were below average with no significant difference between the

performance of girls and boys, reflecting the school's success in raising boys' achievement and representing good progress. The school's analysis of data confirms that the majority of pupils, including those with LDD, made good progress in relation to their starting points. Work seen during the inspection shows that pupils are continuing to achieve well as a result of good teaching and the high level of support that they receive. The school makes extensive use of art to support learning across the curriculum and, as a result, standards in this subject are high.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. This is a safe and orderly school. Racism is not tolerated. Pupils feel safe from bullying and have the confidence to know that the school will deal effectively with any incidents. A positive learning climate promotes good relationships. The pupils have helped frame the school rules and keep them very well. They behave well and enjoy being in school. 'Buddies' help with school work and at playtimes. Monitors carry out responsibilities seriously. The school council shares in decision making.

Pupils learn to think about others: the school supports a wide range of charities during the year through fund raising initiatives. Work on display around the school reflects pupils' knowledge and awareness of a wide range of beliefs and cultures. Lessons give pupils opportunities to develop mutual understanding and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Attendance has improved this year, but remains below average. Many positive strategies are in place, however, and the school continues to strive for improved attendance.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives. Healthy living is promoted well through the many opportunities for pupils to take part in regular sporting activities and to learn about healthy eating. Pupils are helped to understand issues related to tobacco, alcohol and substance abuse.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The key feature that promotes pupils' good progress is the high level of sensitive, individual support they receive throughout the school from teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers plan their work well and fully involve learning support assistants so that they know clearly what lessons are designed to achieve. The result is that those who find learning difficult make similarly good progress to their classmates. Work is usually matched well to the wide range of pupils' needs. The occasional exception is when higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Good relationships, together with clear, consistent expectations of work and behaviour, support good classroom management. Teachers make good links between subjects that reinforce learning and help pupils to make

sense of what they are learning. A particularly good example is the way that art and design is used to support work across the curriculum. Stories in literacy lessons not only promote good reading habits but are chosen to enable pupils to consider moral dilemmas and to reflect on the feelings of others.

Teachers use assessment well to support planning and to set appropriate targets for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is well matched to the needs of all pupils. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. With help from the EAZ, the school has enriched the curriculum with a valuable programme of visits and visitors. This adds relevance and enjoyment to lessons, capturing pupils' interest and imagination and helping them to progress.

Parents approve of the school's homework policy and the successful home reading scheme that is helping to raise standards. Parents acknowledge that the school makes considerable efforts to involve them in partnership with their children's education and particularly appreciate the family learning opportunities that are provided.

Pupils with LDD are well supported to take advantage of the full range of curricular opportunities. A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme is in place.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is well designed to support children's progress in all the expected areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils within a safe, supportive and orderly environment. Teachers monitor academic progress carefully and pupils understand what they need to do to improve. One commented, 'Teachers encourage you and expect you to do your best'. Targets are set and parents are well informed to support good progress for pupils. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are supported well to make good progress.

Pupils come to school happily and are confident to approach staff with any worries or concerns. The 'Golden Rules' programme ensures that caring for one another remains central to the work of the school and pupils enjoy the rewards it provides.

Child protection procedures and risk assessments are carried out systematically.

The school liaises closely with outside agencies such as the youth, welfare and medical services. This strengthens the care and safety of the whole school community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has drawn on his wealth of experience to manage the amalgamation of two schools very effectively so that the continuity of pupils' learning and achievement is maintained between the two sites.

A rigorous programme of monitoring classroom standards by managers at all levels means that any weaknesses are quickly identified and tackled. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

The school makes excellent use of the additional opportunities funded through the EAZ to broaden pupils' experience. Advantage is also taken of strong links with other agencies, such as the youth services, to extend social learning. A particularly good aspect of management is the way that opportunities are recognised and seized for the school's benefit, for example, the way that the caretaker's skills have been used to turn the school and its grounds into a calm, pleasant learning environment.

Governors are well informed, so that they support the school well and understand the challenges that the amalgamation presents. They hold the school to account for its performance well. A consequence of combining the budgets of two schools is that there is currently a larger than usual financial surplus. Governors have plans to conserve these funds to enable them to manage contingencies arising from moving the school onto a single site.

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Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 2 | 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? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 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 | 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 | 2 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 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? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | 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

As you know, Mrs Auton, Mrs Machell and I visited your school to check how well it is doing. Thank you very much for the way you welcomed us into your school. We were impressed by the courtesy and help you gave us and enjoyed talking to you about your work and your life in the school. We agree with you that yours is a good school, that it is a happy place where everyone is safe and can enjoy themselves.

The best things about the school are:

- everyone in the school cares for you well so that you get help with any difficulties
- you make good progress through the school because you are well taught
- those of you who find learning a little difficult are given help by their teachers and teaching assistants so that they can make good progress
- you behave well, in and out of lessons, and help each other
- most of you come to school regularly so that you do not miss anything
- the school provides lots of interesting things for you to do outside lessons.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school a better place to learn. These are:

- to help all of you to attend regularly and to make sure that you do not take time off without a very good reason
- to make lessons even better by making sure that work is not too easy for those of you who learn new things quickly.

Thank you for helping us with our work. We hope that you carry on enjoying lessons and continue to help Mr Potter and your teachers to make Thomas Gray an even better place to learn.