

Prescot Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104425
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	286938
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lesley Traves

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 on roll	
School	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Bennett
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Carson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Maryville Road Prescot Merseyside L34 2TA
Telephone number	0151 4932434
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a large school, which serves a wide area of Prescott. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils come from a very mixed range of backgrounds, with a significant number coming from areas of some social and economic need. An above average percentage of pupils have free school meals, but a lower than average percentage have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need. There are a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language and a few who are in public care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Prescott Primary is an outstanding school. This is exactly how it sees itself. One of the main reasons for its great success is its exceptionally strong focus on enabling all pupils to do their very best, whatever their starting points. Leadership and management are relentless in their pursuit of high standards. Much is expected of pupils and the highest quality of care, guidance and support is provided, to help them fulfil their potential. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well and their personal development is outstanding. They grow to become confident, trustworthy young people who respect and care for others. This is seen, for example, in the way they include children new to the school and help them settle quickly. As one pupil said, 'I have had no problems here. Everyone is friendly. I am happy and my mum is happy, too.' Parents' support for the school is overwhelmingly positive. They particularly value the high quality of leadership, care and teaching and the way the school takes on board their views and deals with their concerns. Comments from one parent sum up the views of many others, 'The staff are passionate and committed. Nothing is too much trouble for them.'

Pupils say that they love school and feel happy and secure. This is reflected in their huge enjoyment of their work and the pride they take in it. They throw themselves into activities with gusto and are bursting with enthusiasm as they explain the tasks they are undertaking. They express boundless enthusiasm for information and communication technology (ICT) because it is presented to them in such an exciting and innovative way. These highly positive attitudes stem in no small part from outstanding teaching. Pupils' behaviour is impeccable and adds much to their learning; they want to please their teachers and do what is right. Pupils develop a real sense of responsibility and good citizenship because this is strongly encouraged. The work of the school council gives them a real chance to have their say and make things better. The council is particularly proud of the way it has reduced litter in the school grounds through lobbying for more bins and organising teams of litter pickers.

Pupils reach standards that are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in ICT are also high. Any differences in the rate of learning by various groups of pupils are ironed out as they move through the school. Consequently, all groups, including those who are most vulnerable, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few who speak English as an additional language are exceptionally well provided for and make outstanding progress. In addition to outstanding teaching, one of the main reasons for this is the thoroughness and rigour with which progress is monitored. Staff are particularly skilled at identifying and supporting any pupils who initially do not do as well as expected. Pupils get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage because of high quality teaching and build on this exceptionally well throughout the rest of the school. All staff plan lessons very thoroughly to meet individual needs. They involve pupils very effectively in identifying their next learning steps. The school has prioritised writing as a development area and initiatives to tackle this are working very well. All pupils, but especially boys, are highly motivated to write because of the stimulating activities provided for them. The curriculum is outstanding because the school strives successfully to make it relevant to all pupils and to prepare them as well as possible for their future lives. The way that ICT permeates all aspects of learning is a strength. The school makes very good use of partnerships with other organisations; for example, to provide high quality sporting activities, which deepen pupils' understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.

A key feature of the outstanding leadership and management of the school is the exceptional way in which leaders and managers at all levels work together to develop the school. All leaders share a common understanding of what they want to achieve. They are highly skilled in planning for the future and translating those plans into action. The school has excellent systems for evaluating its performance with a high degree of accuracy. As a result, it identifies exactly the right priorities for future development and has outstanding capacity for further improvement. Governors give a particularly astute steer to the work of the school. They are bold and creative in the decisions they make, for example, in funding the creation of the 'classroom of the future'.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no areas for improvement other than those that the school has identified within its school improvement plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

On entry to Nursery, the majority of pupils have skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in language and number. They make exceptionally good progress through the Foundation Stage because their individual needs are particularly well met. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority have met the goals expected of them and some have exceeded these. Personal and social development is a very strong area. Pupils build very effectively on this firm foundation through Key Stages 1 and 2. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are usually above average, although there are occasional fluctuations in test results, related to the ability of the pupils. The current Year 2 class are on track to reach above average standards. In four out of the last five years, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been significantly above average, with around half of the pupils reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics, and more in science. The school consistently meets and sometimes exceeds the challenging targets it sets itself. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few learning English as an additional language make outstanding progress. This is because the school is particularly adept at identifying what they need to do to improve and in ensuring their learning is broken down into small steps for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils love their school and are very proud of it. They show a real passion for learning and say this is because lessons are interesting and fun. They are also pleased that their teachers expect such a lot of them because, 'you need to do well for your future'. They respond by working exceptionally hard. Their manners and behaviour are exemplary. They have very responsible attitudes because they are trusted. They take very good care, for example, of the high quality computer equipment in use. Pupils say that they know how to keep themselves safe and feel secure in school because, 'arguments and bullying are dealt with quickly'. They particularly value the work of the learning mentor in helping them deal with any problems that arise. The majority attend regularly. The school works very hard with families who have issues with attendance and punctuality and is achieving success. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for future life, not only because of their strong achievement in basic skills, but also because of the school's forward thinking attitude to providing every child with a chance to study modern foreign languages and excellent opportunities for ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of teaching is a vital ingredient in pupils achieving so well. Throughout the school, teaching is vibrant and stimulating. Teachers know just how to catch pupils' attention at the outset. Lessons are carried out at a cracking pace, which fully involves and challenges all pupils. Expert use is made of ICT and media equipment to generate interest and engage pupils in learning. Particularly close attention is paid to how pupils learn best. This is having a strong impact on the learning of boys and on a small group of girls who the school found to be more passive in mathematics lessons. Highly effective teaching and learning is underpinned by exemplary planning that ensures all pupils are very effectively provided for, whatever their needs and abilities. Throughout the school, teachers are adept at using assessment information to this end. High quality, sensitive support from teaching assistants enables those with particular learning needs to make rapid progress, as do the highly structured and effective small group sessions for these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally rich and varied. The school strives to ensure it meets the present and future needs of all pupils. It ensures excellent provision for literacy and numeracy, without neglecting other areas. The use of ICT to support and facilitate learning in all subjects is particularly innovative and exciting. For example, during the inspection, Year 3 children were making 'stop frame animation' films related to the Second World War, combining the use of sophisticated technology with history, art and design, and literacy. Linking subjects together in this way is not only stimulating and enjoyable, but also ensures that learning is relevant. Another innovation is the high quality provision of modern foreign languages, which are taught from Year 1 onwards. An excellent programme of visits and visitors and strong community links extend learning very effectively, through first-hand experiences that fire pupils' imaginations. There is a wealth of lunchtime and after-school activities on offer which enrich learning and provide very good social opportunities for pupils at both key stages. These are very popular and pupils say that it is hard to choose between them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Staff know the pupils very well and work extremely hard to meet their individual needs. Extremely positive relationships between staff and pupils have a strong impact on both their personal development and their learning. The work of the learning mentor very effectively ensures that all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable, have someone to share their problems with and a warm and friendly place to go to when they need time to reflect. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported through their individual educational plans, which set out very clearly how their needs should be met. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are very thorough and robust. Procedures for checking on pupils' academic progress are outstanding from the Foundation Stage onwards and underpin pupils' excellent achievement. The school makes very detailed, regular checks on how well each pupil is doing, ensuring that no one slips through the net. Teachers make exceptional use of this information to set suitably challenging

targets with the pupils to guide future learning. Pupils understand their targets very well and most importantly are clear about what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure a very clear direction for the work of the school. In conjunction with senior staff and governors, they form a highly effective team, committed to continuous school improvement. They believe the pursuit of high standards to be 'non-negotiable'. A key strength of the headteacher's leadership is her ability to support and challenge others to develop their skills and take on increased responsibility. Innovative steps are taken to enable staff to make the most of their individual talents, for example, through working with other local schools to share good practice. There is strength in depth in the leadership team because all senior staff are highly skilled and experienced in their roles. They are able to take over seamlessly from the headteacher or the deputy headteacher, when the need arises, so that, for example, school leaders can use their expertise in partnership work with the local authority. They have a strong impact on developing teaching and learning and raising standards. There has been outstanding improvement since the last inspection. For example, ICT has been turned from an area with weaknesses, into a strength of the school. High standards have been maintained. Governors use their expertise to excellent effect in supporting the school. They have made astute appointments and are not afraid to take calculated risks to achieve the best for the pupils. They act as true 'critical friends' who hold the school closely to account. The school provides good value for money; its success is achieved at relatively high cost.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I recently visited your school to find out about all the exciting things you are doing and how well you are learning. Thank you for being so very polite and helpful to me. I enjoyed talking to you and it was very interesting to hear what you had to say about your school. I particularly enjoyed seeing you at work in the 'classroom of the future'. I was so interested in the 'stop frame animations'. How clever Year 3 are!

I was particularly pleased to hear that you like your school very much indeed and that you enjoy your lessons and all the other activities available to you. I agree with you that your school is outstanding and that the teachers and teaching assistants are very good indeed at helping you to learn. All the staff take excellent care of you. I was also very pleased to hear that you feel safe and always have someone to talk to if you have a problem. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher, together with all the other staff, have excellent ideas for improving the school. I am very glad that they take your ideas on board, too. I think the hall will be lovely when it has been refurbished. Perhaps you will let me come and have a cup of coffee and use the computers, like your mums and dads will be able to do.

Your behaviour is impeccable (a word for you to look up in the dictionary). You should be really proud of yourselves for the way you get on well together and care for each other and your school. I was pleased to hear how well you help any new children to settle down and feel included.

Thank you very much for helping me. You can help your teachers to make the school even better by continuing to work hard and enjoy learning.