



Northway Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 104565
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286979
Inspection date 24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Colin Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Northway
School category	Community		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3-11		Merseyside L15 7JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 7223540
Number on roll (school)	235	Fax number	0151 2833473
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs S Donnelly
		Headteacher	Mr P Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Northway is an average sized primary school. The proportions of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals are above average, which reflects the degree of social deprivation in the area. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage. A small number are of Asian, Black African, Chinese or mixed heritage but none of these children is at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Northway is an outstanding school in terms of the quality of education and the value for money it provides. The school has a distinctive family ethos in which all pupils are valued and included. This is recognised in the award of a 'Charter for educational inclusion'. Exemplary levels of care, guidance and support are provided. The most vulnerable pupils, in particular, are extremely well supported. Within this climate of trust, all pupils are safeguarded and every child matters. This is reflected in their outstanding personal development and impeccable behaviour. Pupils' appreciation of the importance of living healthy, safe and responsible lifestyles is excellent. They are extremely well prepared for the future. The school is highly regarded by parents and the local authority. As one parent explained, 'The school is an extension to family life rather than somewhere your child has to go'.

A significant contribution to the school's overall effectiveness is the outstanding achievement of its pupils. Despite many children entering school with attainment below that expected for their age, standards are well above national averages by the time pupils are ready to move on to high school. Extremely good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a very positive start. The progress made by Year 6 pupils in 2006 was in the top 5% nationally. Nevertheless, the school continues to strive for further improvement. In information and communication technology (ICT), for example, although pupils are adept in searching the Internet and handling information, the school is trying to improve resources to bring pupils' understanding of control technology up to scratch. The computer suite and the large interactive whiteboards are used well, but classroom computers are not used sufficiently. Similarly, the school is intent on raising standards in English to match the exceptionally high standards in mathematics and science. Considerable efforts are being made to improve pupils' writing. Much has been done to create enjoyment and purpose for writing. However, the level of challenge in writing for the most able pupils, particularly boys, is not as high as it could be in every lesson.

Pupils' exceptionally good achievement is attributable to a comprehensively planned and extremely well taught curriculum. Meticulous tracking of pupils' progress and intervention to boost achievement when it appears to slow down is another very influential factor. The headteacher's sterling leadership, along with excellent support from staff and governors, is at the root of the school's success. The school's self-evaluation is both exacting and accurate. New strategies are constantly examined, tested and evaluated. Despite past successes there is no complacency. This is why the school judged leadership and management, and other areas, to be good rather than outstanding. In the school's view, the search for excellence has no limit. This is why improvement since the previous inspection and the school's capacity for further improvement are excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly that of the more able boys.

- Increase pupils' understanding of control technology and ensure that they make maximum use of classroom computers to improve their ICT skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Over a third of children starting Nursery have difficulties with communication. Strongly developing their spoken language in Nursery and their early reading and writing skills in Reception rapidly accelerates their progress. Consequently, by the end of the Foundation Stage, virtually all children have reached the goals expected nationally in all areas of learning. A smooth transition into Year 1 enables children's very good progress to continue. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards have been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the last three years. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 have risen in response to setting and reaching challenging targets. In 2006, standards reached very high levels, within the top 10% nationally. In mathematics and science, two thirds of the pupils reach advanced levels. Standards in English, although above average, are not as high. Boys, on the whole, do not achieve as well in writing as they do in reading, mathematics or science. Otherwise there is little difference in the overall progress made by boys and girls, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, higher attainers, and pupils from various ethnic backgrounds. This is why pupils' achievement is outstanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils share very similar values. They regard any form of bullying or racism as inherently wrong and work together to create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. As one pupil commented, 'School is like a family.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are exemplary. Pupils' fascination with learning begins in Nursery and continues through the school, as new stimulating experiences are unveiled. Their understanding of citizenship is exemplary. Acting as buddies and prefects, they show considerable maturity in the way they care for others. Pupils' excellent awareness of healthy eating and the importance of exercise are reflected in the achievement of Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The school council is highly developed. Members plan and execute their own projects, which helps build their future economic well-being. Determined efforts to reduce absenteeism are paying dividends. Attendance is improving and has now reached average levels.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils are managed extremely well because of the excellent relationships with teachers. As a result, they work diligently and take pride in presentation. Stimulating approaches are used to capture pupils' interests. This is reflected in the delight on the faces of Nursery children as they learn about letters and numbers, using a huge computer screen. New ideas are meticulously explained and teachers question pupils very skilfully to encourage them to reflect on how well they are learning. This strategy increases pupils' understanding and boosts their enthusiasm. The assessment of pupils' learning is highly sophisticated. Teachers know exactly what pupils have achieved. They use this information particularly well to adapt lessons to meet the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. New approaches, such as carrying out practical tasks before writing and planning written work in pairs, are proving effective. Teachers' expectations are usually high and many additional activities are provided to extend pupils' learning. However, in writing, opportunities are occasionally missed to provide additional challenge for the most able pupils to ensure that the boys, in particular, reach higher levels.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich curriculum provided has a profound impact on pupils' enjoyment of school. In particular, the many diverse activities provided during theme weeks are eagerly anticipated. Several pupils described the Caribbean music and dance workshop as, 'the most brilliant experience we have ever had'. The curriculum is sensitively adapted to meet the vast majority of pupils' needs. The individual education plans provided for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exemplary because of the way their progress towards the targets within them is measured. This is largely why most of these pupils eventually reach the standards expected nationally. Increasing attention is now being given to the needs of the gifted and talented pupils, in sport, music and through summer school. Increased attention to ICT has significantly improved pupils' skills in communicating information and modelling. However, insufficient use of classroom computers and lack of resources to improve pupils' understanding of control technology are holding progress back.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures for health and safety, child protection and the safe recruitment of staff are firmly established. Pupils feel safe because they have adults and friends to confide in. Dedicated support staff are highly successful in increasing the confidence and self-esteem of the most vulnerable pupils. Comments such as 'She has blossomed at Northway' reflect parents' and carers' gratitude for what the school provides. Trusting

and very effective relationships with outside agencies, particularly the educational welfare officer, ensure that pupils are safeguarded and barriers to learning are removed successfully. Pupils benefit from first-class guidance, personally and academically. This is achieved by maintaining detailed records, setting clear targets for improvement and tracking pupils' progress towards them. Greater consistency in the marking of pupils' work, the only improvement issue following the previous inspection, has been fully remedied. Pupils appreciate the 'stars' they receive for good work and the 'moons' to prompt improvements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Much of the school's success is attributable to excellent leadership. The headteacher's personal contribution is highly significant. He is the driving force behind the rigorous procedures devised to monitor and evaluate the work of the school accurately. A key factor in the school's outstanding effectiveness is the way teachers measure and analyse their pupils' performance and draw up plans to rescue any faltering progress. The headteacher, senior staff and subject leaders complete detailed lesson observations and examine pupils' work carefully. Strenuous efforts are made to ascertain the views of all members of the school community. This excellent self-evaluation provides a crystal clear map of where the school is. Teamwork and meticulous planning fuel the engine of further improvement. Governors benefit from a rich flow of information which enables them to make informed decisions and hold the school to account. Their diverse knowledge and skills are used to maximum effect in offering first-class support. The school's significant achievements are widely appreciated. As a former Beacon school, its leaders now share their good practice with other schools within their local authority and three neighbouring local authorities through a leadership programme.

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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	1
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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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.

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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for answering my questions so politely and trying so hard to show me your best work. I greatly enjoyed my visit. You are right to be proud. Your school is excellent in almost every way.

Your school is extremely well led and managed. Teachers and support staff are very caring, not only about your learning, but also about how well you develop as good citizens. All those extra lessons, out-of-school activities and opportunities to find out about leading healthy and safe lifestyles are proving very worthwhile. Your excellent behaviour, enjoyment in learning and the care you show towards others are very noticeable. In particular, the children who need most help are looked after and supported extremely well by staff and other children.

I thoroughly enjoyed observing lessons. I noticed how the excellent teaching helps you to learn. This is why your progress is exceptionally good and standards are very high.

There is not much I could ask your school to improve. I have only two recommendations.

Your teachers are working very hard to improve your writing by making the topics more interesting. They usually set more difficult work to help the most able pupils to achieve as well as they possibly can. I would like this to happen in every lesson, especially for some of the more able boys. You can help by reading good literature for yourselves. This will give you lots of ideas to improve your writing.

Your teachers want to improve ICT, especially your understanding of control technology. Some new equipment will be needed first and you need more opportunities to use your classroom computers. You can help by practising your ICT skills regularly.

Please keep on trying your best and carry on helping your teachers and each other just as you did when I visited.