



Sherdley Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104769
Local Authority St. Helens
Inspection number 287026
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Margot D'Arcy

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mill Lane
School category	Community		Sutton, St Helens
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside WA9 4HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 678683
Number on roll (school)	457	Fax number	01744 678684
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lorraine Burgess
		Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Carter
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area that is broadly average in social and economic terms. Most pupils are White British but a very small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds and are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is about average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There is a range of attainment on entry to the Nursery, but overall standards are generally as expected for children this age.

The school has been accredited with Investors in People status and gained the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sherdley Primary is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. This judgement reflects the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. However, the school is well aware that pupils can do better and is working hard to raise standards and eliminate a legacy of underachievement at Key Stage 2. Although standards and rates of achievement have fluctuated from year to year, too often junior pupils have not built effectively enough on their earlier attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Since her appointment, just under three years ago, the headteacher has implemented rigorous monitoring systems to identify the reasons for pupils' underachievement and devised good strategies to bring about improvement. For example, considerable work has been done to improve teaching. Inadequate teaching, one of the main causes of underachievement, has been dealt with effectively and the quality of teaching is now good. Assessment systems have also been improved so that underachievement can be easily pinpointed and addressed. Although significant staffing disruptions have slowed the pace of improvement, things are now looking much more positive and secure. The impact can be seen in pupils' enjoyment of lessons and the good learning that is taking place. However, the legacy of underachievement will take time to eliminate. Consequently, test results at the end of Year 6 are not yet reflecting the improvements that are continuing to be made.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage where good provision ensures they achieve well. Key skills in literacy, numeracy and social development are continuously promoted alongside learning in other areas. Well-planned practical activities and a good focus on play ensure that children use all their senses to learn and develop a real enthusiasm for school. This enthusiasm continues through Key Stages 1 and 2 because the drive to improve things is tangible and pupils cannot help but be caught up in this. They are very aware that they are at the heart of the school's work to give them the best there is. This is certainly paying off in terms of pupils' personal development where standards are good. Pupils are keenly aware of the school's rules and describe these as fair. For example, they explain that 'some rules are there to keep everyone safe and to make sure that we know how to work together'. Pupils' well-developed skills in working cooperatively were seen in many lessons, for example in talking through strategies to approach mathematical problems or working with a partner to produce computer-generated pictures or dance sequences. Good behaviour was seen in many contexts, with standards being well tested during wet play and lunchtimes on both inspection days. Pupils are rightly proud of achieving the Healthy Schools Award and of the work they do to support others. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and talk knowledgeably about how the money they raise for different charities is used.

Whilst the overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, there are some significant strengths. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. There is a clear awareness that whilst improvements have been made there is still work to be done, for example on the curriculum. This provision is satisfactory overall. Some aspects, such as

enrichment through visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, are strong but other areas, such as making meaningful links between subjects are being addressed but are at an early stage of development. Effective leadership has ensured good care, guidance and support for pupils. Pastoral care is particularly effective in promoting pupils' personal development. Relatively recent improvements to assessment systems are providing the school with much better information, for example, about the rates of progress of different groups. This is allowing intervention to be focused in the right areas and pupils to be set challenging improvement targets. The leadership team and governors know that addressing the backlog of underachievement will take time. However, they are on the right track to accomplishing this so there is good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 so that the proportions of pupils attaining the expected level and the higher level reflect at least good achievement from the end of Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. By the time they begin Year 1 they have attained the expected levels in all areas of learning. During Years 1 and 2, children build effectively on their earlier learning. By the end of Year 2 they reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress during Key Stage 2 has fluctuated considerably for a number of years. Too often it has been inadequate, either overall or in particular subjects, even when the standards at the end of Year 6 have been in line or above national averages. Whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, given their starting points, pupils could do better. The most recent tests are not as favourable as last year's. Whilst they show generally satisfactory achievement in English more pupils were capable of reaching the expected levels than was the case. This was also evident in mathematics and science, but in these subjects achievement at the higher level was not good enough given the standards attained at the end of Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and very good support is put in to ensure they learn effectively. The progress of the very small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English is good in response to very effective support in class, which is supplemented by specialist help from the local authority.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are confident and have a well-developed sense of their own worth. This stems from the strong and supportive relationships with staff and good opportunities to be actively involved in learning and to contribute to the school and wider community. Creative ways to

fundraise for charities are often prompted by pupils' own interests, such as Children In Need. Pupils show a perceptive insight of many of the problems faced by vulnerable children and can explain how their money will be used to help them. Pupils appreciate the way the school listens and responds to their opinions and accept that not all their suggestions are feasible, such as providing prawn stir-fry at lunchtime! They readily take on responsibilities, such as lunchtime play leaders, and in various ways make a good contribution to helping the school run smoothly. Their enjoyment of learning is very evident in lessons and in the high take up of extra-curricular activities. Most pupils arrive punctually. Their attendance is in line with national averages and improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching and learning reflects the significant focus that has been given to improving this aspect of provision. Strengths have been identified and built on and weaknesses tackled diligently, for example, through intensive support and coaching. Good and better teaching is seen in all phases of the school, but there is still work to be done in a few areas where challenge and pace could be sharper. However, in most lessons the teaching is good or better. Teachers use a wide range of approaches to ensure that all pupils are involved and develop effective learning strategies. Lessons typically involve techniques that allow pupils time to think, discuss their thoughts and strategies with a partner, and be involved in assessing how well they and their friends are learning. All this is done in an atmosphere that promotes pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Questioning is sharp, and an innovative approach, in which pupils do not raise their hands to answer, is frequently used. This allows teachers to target pupils who frequently allow others to answer. Pupils are also expected to listen out for and indicate that they have spotted key words in teachers' explanations and instructions. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils picked up the words 'total' and 'difference' and indicated they knew they would have to use addition and subtraction strategies. Teaching assistants play a full part in lessons and make a very effective contribution.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for with individual learning programmes matched well to their needs. Good learning experiences are also provided for children in the Foundation Stage. These promote basic skills very well, encourage independence and help children gain a good appreciation of different cultures. Some good work is being done to enhance the curriculum for Year 1 pupils so that it builds seamlessly on their previous experiences. In other year groups, the school is at an early stage of developing links between subjects to better promote key skills and more meaningful learning. A pilot activity focusing on this with Year 5 pupils

has proved very productive in increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The use of information and communication technology to support learning is satisfactory. Throughout the school, pupils have good opportunities to learn modern foreign languages and take part in a wide range of out-of-school activities that promote skills in the arts, science and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A high level of pastoral care, guidance and support is provided for all pupils. They say adults are always ready to listen and help them. Opportunities for pupils to learn about social and emotional issues are regular, taught sensitively and promote personal development well. Pupils are made aware of dangers, such as bullying, and of how to deal with these to keep safe. Very good links with outside agencies have helped in a number of ways, for example in improving behaviour. The good progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also reflects the high quality of cooperation between the school and specialist agencies. Government requirements for the health, safety and well-being of pupils are all in place. Good systems have been devised for tracking pupils' progress. These are beginning to be embedded and used effectively to identify where intervention is needed to improve achievement. All pupils are involved in assessing their progress toward their individual improvement targets. Generally informative marking also gives pupils a useful insight into how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher knows the school well and has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Her vitality, enthusiasm and dedication to the pupils are driving the school forward. Significant challenges with staffing have been met head on and whilst these have slowed the course of improvement the headteacher's determination that pupils should achieve better has not wavered. A strong deputy headteacher and senior management team have been put in place; all provide good support for the headteacher and are good role models for teaching. Work this year to develop the role of subject leaders is also beginning to pay off. A true sense of teamwork has been created so that staff are now working toward a shared vision for improvement. This includes the governors who support the school effectively. They know its strengths and are developing a clear understanding of what needs improving. Promoting the full range of learners' needs is at the heart of the school's work. Significant improvements to the way behaviour is promoted and managed, together with improved provision to support and guide pupils' personal and academic progress, have paid off. So too has the work that has been done to raise the quality of teaching. These things have laid the foundations for good academic achievement. There are good relationships with parents who hold the school in high regard.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 your warm welcome when I visited your school with Mr Wainwright and Mrs Machell. We very much enjoyed our time at Sherdley and would like to share with you what we found out. Lots of things impressed us but we particularly liked:

- your good behaviour and the way you try hard and cooperate so well with each other in lessons
- the good quality of teaching that you get. You told us that your teachers helped you a lot and provided interesting, fun lessons and after-school activities - we agree
- how well everyone at the school looks after you, giving you good advice about how to improve your work, stay safe and keep healthy
- the responsible way that you act, carrying out jobs and caring for each other and for people who are not as fortunate as you are
- the way your headteacher never stops trying to ensure that the school helps you to develop into good learners as well as kind, sensible young people.

Before we left we asked your school to improve in one area:

- although by Year 6 you reach the standards expected of 11-year olds, we know that you can do even better. We want your school to help you gain higher standards in English, mathematics and science.

This isn't just down to Mrs Carter and the teachers though. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can in lessons and with your homework, and by continuing to attend school regularly.

Best wishes for the future