

Lyme Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104776
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	287030
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Knight
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Winstanley
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2003
School address	Lyme Street Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9HD
Telephone number	01744 678350
Fax number	01744 678350

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this average sized school come from a wide range of backgrounds. The school serves an area of relative social and economic disadvantage. Higher than average proportions of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or claim free school meals. The number of pupils entering or leaving the school at times other than normal is higher than average. There are a few pupils from Traveller families and pupils looked after by the local authority. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with a tiny proportion using English as an additional language. The school is well advanced in its extended provision, offering children a full-time Nursery provision and before-school and after-school care.

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 standard of education. There have been improvements over the last two years in standards in mathematics and in science, which are now both average. However, standards in English in Year 6, especially in handwriting, punctuation and spelling, have been consistently below average for several years and the school has made the least improvement in this aspect of its work since the last inspection.

Throughout the school pupils make satisfactory academic progress. The very recent improvements to the quality of teachers' marking and to assessment systems are resulting in better focused teaching and higher achievement in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers relate well to them, involve them in lessons and encourage them to learn from their mistakes, rather than being embarrassed by them. Pupils generally behave sensibly, but in some lessons a small minority do not respond immediately to instructions or consistently listen to staff or to their classmates. Pupils understand the benefits of a balanced diet and of taking regular exercise. These good aspects of the school's work have been acknowledged through externally accredited awards. Pupils' learning is considerably enhanced by the wide range of visitors and specialists, who add value to pupils' sporting and musical achievements. However, the school could do more to improve pupils' learning outside the classroom, particularly their cultural development.

The curriculum substantially meets the needs of pupils. Despite some limitations in accommodation children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes). Recent improvements in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who are gifted or talented go a long way to ensure that these pupils are adequately catered for. The needs of the more able pupils are not always well enough planned for or met in lessons. Much of the enjoyment pupils derive from school is due to the sensitive support they receive from all staff, both in and out of the classroom. This is particularly effective for pupils who have learning or emotional difficulties and for those who are vulnerable, enabling them to achieve as well as other pupils.

Within the overall satisfactory quality of leadership and management, the headteacher provides effective leadership, having steered the school efficiently through some difficult circumstances and taken tough action to improve weaker aspects of achievement, teaching and management. Although these have improved, their overall quality is satisfactory rather than good. There are also some relative weaknesses in subject coordination and in governance. There is a clear commitment to the raising of standards and planning comprehensively for the move to the new premises within a year. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, as is the school's capacity to improve further. There are aspects of the school's evaluation that are over-optimistic or that pay too little attention to the impact of provision on pupils' achievements and experiences. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- In Years 3 to 6, improve standards and achievement in writing.
- Raise the achievement of the more able pupils throughout the school.
- Extend the opportunities for learning outside the classroom to enrich pupils' experiences and help them find out more about other cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter Nursery with below expected skills overall, but with well below expected levels in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. They make satisfactory progress through the Nursery and Reception classes but many enter Year 1 not meeting the targets set for them in those key aspects of literacy and numeracy. Children make the best progress in their physical development, with more children achieving the targets set in this area of their learning than average.

Most pupils continue to make satisfactory progress overall through Years 1 to 6. Standards in Year 2 are broadly average. In Year 6, a high mobility factor has distorted the school's achievement record in recent years and its ability to set accurate targets. However, there is compelling evidence that those pupils who remained in the school from Year 2 to Year 6 achieved at least satisfactorily. In the 2006 national tests, standards in mathematics improved to average as a result of focused interventions and more rigorous assessment. Standards in English remain below average, because pupils do not spell or punctuate accurately enough or take sufficient care with their handwriting. The school's data indicates that pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them in the 2007 national tests. Throughout the school, the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. However, vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily because of effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy learning and coming to school. They say that teachers make learning fun. The majority of pupils behave well. However, a small minority tend to cause minor disruption in some lessons. The caring relationships that exist between staff and pupils and among many of the pupils ensure that they are happy. Older pupils develop a sense of responsibility and are keen to serve their school community. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and they have contributed significantly to the school's success in receiving the national Healthy Schools award.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, within this overall judgement, pupils' cultural awareness is underdeveloped. Attendance is average and exclusions are rare. In the Foundation Stage children's personal, social and emotional skills are good, and this lays a secure basis for the good relationships evident throughout the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some good teaching. A common strength is in the good relationships which mean that lessons are conducted in a positive atmosphere that generates fun and enjoyment. Given that there are a small minority of pupils who present very challenging behaviour, staff, including teaching assistants, manage to sustain good control in lessons. There are some instances where pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to listen well or to stop their own conversations. This sometimes slows the pace of learning. In most lessons, explanations are clear and pupils understand what they should be able to do better by the end of the lesson and what they will have to do to achieve that aim.

Sometimes the more able pupils are 'champing at the bit' to get on with their tasks, but are made to wait too long to do so because they have to listen to the teacher explain what they already know. This has a negative impact on their ability to achieve well.

A positive feature of learning is pupils' ability to sensibly discuss ideas in pairs so that they deepen their understanding and develop their speaking skills. There are good examples in Years 5 and 6 of very helpful marking and of pupils evaluating their own and others' work. This enhances their ability to understand better how to improve and how to evaluate their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum generally meets pupils' needs. However, it does not fully meet the needs of the more able pupils. The programme to ensure that pupils are aware of the need for healthy eating and frequent physical exercise is good. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from French lessons, the restricted opportunities to learn outside the classroom limit their cultural awareness and first-hand experiences. Visitors to the school support pupils in their musical and sporting activities well. The curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage is effective, but somewhat diminished by the constraints placed upon it by the very cramped internal accommodation and restricted access to the outside area. Throughout the school, staff work successfully to provide pupils with stimulating displays and resources.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes satisfactory care of all its pupils. Pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they need help. There is good support when they are upset or troubled. Parents and carers feel welcome in the school, and they are encouraged to be involved in their children's education. Particularly welcome is the well established 'SHARE' project in which the school and parents work well together to enable parents to better support their children's learning. Pupils feel safe in school because all the staff deal with any instances of bullying effectively. Staff put the established procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety into practice. However, appropriate safeguarding requirements are not fully in place. Strategies are in place for the early identification of pupils who may be in need of additional support. Staff satisfactorily support most pupils in their work. They effectively track their progress, enabling the school to arrange appropriate interventions where necessary. The school's extended provision is good with before-school and after-school clubs and a full-time Nursery provision on offer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher effectively leads the school community in recognising the need to improve standards and to raise pupils' achievements, especially in Years 3 to 6. The management of the school's performance is now good, and has led to several recent improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievements. For example, rigorous and successful action by senior and middle managers has been taken to improve assessment in mathematics. This has accelerated pupils' progress. The new deputy headteacher has made a positive impact in involving pupils more in their own learning. However,

the school has yet to successfully tackle the relative underachievement of the more able pupils. Governors are supportive and are linked effectively to subject areas but are not yet sufficiently involved in analysing specifically why some pupils and some subjects are performing less well than others. Overall, the senior management team effectively manages the school's performance, tracks pupils' progress carefully and checks for any areas where teaching needs to improve. Many of the recent actions taken to improve performance are bearing fruit in better teaching, assessment and achievement. However, subject action plans tend only to focus on what changes will occur rather than on their impact.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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?	No
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

Inspection of Lyme Community Primary School, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9HD

Thank you for making us welcome during the days we spent in your school. We enjoyed our visit to your school. It is currently providing you with a satisfactory education.

What is going well?

- You obviously enjoy school and your lessons.
- You get on well with your friends and with the staff.
- There are many interesting visitors and specialist coaches who help you to be healthy and to enjoy learning.
- Older pupils are beginning to understand how well they are learning and what they need to do improve and this is helping them to make better progress.
- The headteacher and your new deputy headteacher have good ideas about how to make the school improve.

There are some things we have asked the school to do to help it to improve further.

- Help you improve your handwriting, punctuation and spelling so that your standards in English are higher.
- Make sure that those of you who find your work a bit easier than most achieve higher standards.
- Help you understand more about the way people from different backgrounds live.

Some of you could help by paying more attention in lessons.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to enjoy school and work really hard.