



Marshside Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104866
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 287050
Inspection date 8 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	Elswick Road
School category	Community		Marshside, Southport
Age range of pupils	4-11		Merseyside PR9 9XA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01704 211177
Number on roll (school)	201	Fax number	01704 232699
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr James Trail
		Headteacher	Miss Sarah Greer
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves an area that is similar, both socially and economically, to the national average. 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, but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has been accredited with the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Active Mark Gold status, Eco Schools award and an Artsmark. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed two months ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the good range of learning opportunities provided. Their enjoyment of lessons and of lunchtime and after-school activities is obvious and evidenced by their very good attendance. All of these factors contribute significantly to pupils' commendable achievements, both academically and personally.

Standards of personal and social development are outstanding. Pupils show a very mature attitude to supporting each other and contributing to the local and wider community. They enjoy thinking up creative ideas to raise funds for various good causes. More importantly, however, they show considerable insight and sensitivity when explaining the impact of fund-raising; for example, to help children born with a cleft lip and the progress of a little girl they support in Nepal. Behaviour is excellent. There is a true 'family feel' to the school, with pupils showing a genuine level of care for each other; as one explained, 'Everyone knows everyone else, so we are literally friends with everyone!'

Pupils make good progress in their work and consistently attain standards that are well above average by the end of Year 6. Achievement in reading and science is particularly good and the most recent Year 6 test results show improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in mathematics. However, achievement in writing is not as positive. In this aspect, progress is generally satisfactory, but more pupils are capable of reaching the higher level than currently do. The school is aware of this and has devised good strategies to raise achievement that are already beginning to have an impact.

Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons move along at a good pace and teachers' questioning and the work they set pupils generally take good account of the range of learning needs. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, particularly in providing additional support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language. Reception children get off to an excellent start. Everything that happens is a learning opportunity, carefully planned to challenge the children, while making learning fun. For example, an outdoor session on road safety went well beyond helping children to understand how to keep safe, involving them in reading road signs, recognising shapes, writing speeding tickets and developing physical skills as they manoeuvred wheeled vehicles.

The school provides a good curriculum enriched by an excellent range of carefully planned visits and visitors that support pupils' understanding and enhance their enjoyment. Effective links are made between subjects to make learning more meaningful. Overall, pupils' needs are met well by the curriculum and they are well prepared for the next stages of their education. However, the school has not identified pupils with particular gifts or talents and therefore makes no specific additional provision for such pupils. The need to do this has already been identified by the headteacher, who has quickly gained an accurate view of the school's effectiveness.

The impact that she and the new deputy headteacher have made in the short time that they have been in position is notable. An extremely useful system for recording and tracking pupils' achievement had been introduced. This clearly highlights the rate of progress for individual pupils and allows any underachievement to be identified and tackled promptly. Systems for setting and reviewing pupils' improvement targets have also been sharpened to further enhance the effectiveness of teaching and ensure optimum progress for pupils of all ability levels. Both of these developments are already supporting the drive to raise achievement in writing.

All of the pupils spoken to were able to recount both academic and personal targets, reflecting the school's successful provision for caring, guiding and supporting pupils. Indeed, this aspect of provision is outstanding. Pupils are valued and taught how to respect themselves, each other and their environment. They speak knowledgeably about how to keep healthy and stay safe and have very good understanding of how to conserve and protect the environment.

Parents are highly appreciative of the school's work in promoting their children's all-round development. Admiration for the work of the previous leadership team is clearly expressed and many parents took time to remark on how impressed they have been with the impact of the new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Parents' highly positive views, together with the good evidence of the new leadership team's clear and strategic drive to raise standards and improve provision even further, reflect governors' good judgement in making these two key appointments. Leadership and management are good. Following the improvements that have been made since the last inspection, the school has good capacity to improve further and continues to be, as parents put it, 'a lovely environment in which children can grow and learn.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing so that by the end of Year 6 more pupils attain the higher levels in this aspect of English
- Identify pupils with specific gifts and/or talents and ensure that provision is extended to meet their needs

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children are working at the expected level for their age when they begin the Reception class. They progress well and by the start of Year 1 the majority have attained or exceeded all of the learning goals set for this age group. Good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 and is reflected in the well above average standards attained in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. However, for the past two years, test results in writing have not shown as positive a picture of achievement as seen in other subjects. Strategies to improve achievement in this aspect last year were not as successful as the school had hoped. Consequently, the new leadership team has made this a main priority for improvement. New systems for setting targets are already allowing teachers to match work more closely to pupils' needs. There are no

significant differences between boys' and girls' achievement. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at the same good rate as others. Effective additional support is ensuring good progress in the acquisition of English for the minority of pupils who need help in this area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Standards of personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils develop into well rounded individuals demonstrating very good understanding of how to mix, negotiate with, and care for others. They appreciate and value people's differences and opinions. Their thorough understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle was evident in the recent changes they made to what could be sold in the school tuck shop. Pupils also have very good awareness of how to keep safe in a variety of situations. Those on the travel plan committee are instrumental in raising awareness of associated health and safety issues with their schoolmates and parents. School council members take their responsibilities very seriously and gain a superb appreciation of democratic processes and acting and speaking on behalf of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Consistently good teaching is a hallmark of this school. Despite some notable staffing disruptions last year, the quality has been maintained. Good account is taken of pupils' different learning styles, with teachers effectively varying pace, type of questioning and activities to this end. The needs of pupils of all abilities are generally well met; occasionally, higher attainers could cope with more challenge. Since the beginning of this term a sharper focus has been given to identifying individual learning targets and assessing pupils' progress in relation to these. These strategies are beginning to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well planned curriculum promotes pupils' academic and personal development and plays a central part in their enjoyment of learning. Pupils say how much pleasure they get from visits, extra-curricular clubs and visitors, for example teachers from the high school who provide lessons in French and German. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well focused on practical work and learning through play, with excellent challenge built into all activities. Very good attention is given to developing children's basic skills and their independence. Throughout the school, there is good planning to address the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities,

ensuring that they are able to take part fully in what is provided. No specific additional provision is made for gifted or talented pupils so the full range of their needs is not fully catered for. Improvements to the accommodation resulted in some delay in the progress of provision for information and communication technology but everything is now in place to make up lost ground.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a very high level of care, guidance and support, which is recognised and appreciated by parents and pupils. Pupils explained how they could lodge any problems in a 'worry box' and receive help from the staff. They particularly like how the headteacher uses puppets to act out and resolve some of these in assemblies 'so that everyone knows how to help each other'. Trained staff 'listeners', a programme for social and emotional learning and surveys to determine how valued pupils feel reflect the school's high level of commitment to their care and welfare. Child protection procedures are in place. Good marking, clear improvement targets, and opportunities for pupils to assess aspects of their own learning ensure that they have a clear understanding of their strengths and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Through swift and well focused monitoring the new headteacher and deputy headteacher have gained a comprehensive and sharp insight into standards and the quality of provision. Although the headteacher has been in position for a relatively short period, her evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development is astute and accurate. No time has been lost on planning action to improve achievement where this is required, with a good number of action points to secure this already completed. New, clear, systems for tracking progress and setting targets are already operational. Additional strategies to ensure that next year's writing results reflect better achievement by Year 6 pupils are also well in hand. That so much has been accomplished so quickly says much about the effective leadership and management skills of the new team. Importantly, the drive to maintain and improve on the school's established successes is being achieved through full consultation and cooperation with staff, governors, pupils and parents. Governance is good. Governors are justifiably optimistic that the new leadership team will support the school in going from strength to strength, but have rightly set performance targets for the headteacher to ensure that this happens.

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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?	2
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	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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 welcoming me to your school and for being so friendly and polite. I had a very busy day talking to people and watching you learn but I enjoyed myself too, especially talking to you about what it is like to be a pupil at Marshside. I agree with you that it is a good school and I would like to share my main judgements with you. I was very impressed with how much you enjoy learning and how hard you work in lessons. Your behaviour is brilliant. You show real care for each other and such good commitment to improving your environment and helping those who are not as fortunate as you are. You take on jobs willingly and carry them out responsibly, such as leading play activities at break times. In addition to all this you also do well in your work and attain high standards in your tests. Your teachers work hard too, providing interesting lessons and lots of help to ensure that you learn at a good rate. You also told me how well your school looks after you - I agree. As I am sure you will appreciate, all of these good things don't just happen by chance. Headteachers and other managers, together with the governors make them happen. The way that your school is led and managed is another thing that you can be very proud of.

I have asked your school to work at improving two things. Although your writing is good I think that you could do even better and Miss Greer thinks so too. She has some good things planned to help you which I'm sure you will enjoy and work hard at. I have also asked your school to provide some extra activities to help those of you who might have particular gifts or talents, for example in sport, music or art.

I wish you all the very best for the future