



Melling Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104889
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 287056
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wheeler Drive
School category	Community		Melling, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside L31 1DA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 5473349
Number on roll (school)	199	Fax number	0151 5492375
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs B O'Brien
		Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Cullen
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The social backgrounds of the children are mixed. Over one third of the children have no experience of pre-school education. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All but a few children are of White British heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English. The school has undergone significant staffing changes, following three years of discontinuity at senior level. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts two years ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Melling Primary is a good school which seeks to ensure children are 'happy' within a 'caring and stimulating environment'. It has earned the overwhelming confidence of parents. Children do well in their work and express their views openly and confidently, in the knowledge that their contributions are valued by staff and their classmates. The school has been active in seeking their views, for example through questionnaires and 'circle time'. It has enabled them to influence their education by establishing an effective school council. Children say that they enjoy school, especially the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, the 'fun' lessons and the growing range of after-school activities. An exciting programme of enrichment activities, including a wealth of visitors, enhances their learning opportunities. Their positive views of the school are wholeheartedly endorsed by their parents. All aspects of the school's provision are good.

Most children start Reception with below average skills. They make good progress there to reach average standards by the end of the year because they quickly acquire positive learning habits. They are fully involved in activities, and staff make good use of the outdoor facilities. Consistently good teaching enables the older children to achieve well in most areas of learning. Earlier weaknesses in monitoring had masked deficiencies, for example in the variety and creativity of children's, and especially boys', writing. These are now being tackled and improvements are demonstrable amongst the upper juniors. In all years, high quality teaching is now feeding through into good achievement. Standards by Year 6 are above average.

Good leadership and management in the past two years have piloted the school skilfully through the period of uncertainty it has experienced. Key priorities have been established and implemented systematically. The school is well aware of its comparative weaknesses and inconsistencies in the areas of monitoring and evaluation and has plans in place to tackle them. Inspectors' judgements match, and in the case of achievement and overall effectiveness, exceed those of the school. The capacity for improvement is good and the school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that tracking and target-setting systems are rigorous in all subjects.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation role of subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many children start school with below average basic skills. All children make good progress and, by Year 6, have done well to reach above average standards. Progress in the Reception class is good because staff use the resources of an attractive setting to provide stimulating activities and they monitor the children's progress closely. By the time children join Year 1, standards are average. During Years 1 to 6, progress is

good. Test results in Year 2 are just above national expectations. National test results in Year 6 have been more variable with a dip in 2004. However, they recovered in 2005 and further improvements in 2006, in English and in mathematics, resulted in the children achieving above average standards. Girls did better in English, boys did better in mathematics. The school had identified relative weaknesses in boys' writing and is implementing a series of strategies to deal with them. The Year 6 results in 2006 provide encouraging signs of their impact. Inspection findings indicate that all children, especially the upper juniors, are making good progress. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. The work they do is well matched to their needs and they get good support from the staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is committed to putting the 'Melling child' at the heart of all that it does. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good, with the last three aspects being particularly strong. Children enjoy school. They get on well with each other and feel safe. This is equally evident in their playing and in their learning. They feel valued by the staff and are courteous and cooperative in return. The children's influence on school life is steadily growing. Through the increasingly effective school council, they can implement change, such as the healthy tuck shop. Reception children enjoy having Year 6 pupils as buddies. In lessons, children are well motivated and eager to respond. Attendance is satisfactory. Children readily accept responsibilities and have demonstrated their environmental awareness by achieving the bronze eco-schools award. They are gaining skills that will equip them well for their future life. They are particularly adept in using ICT. Opportunities for teamwork and to perform in school and the wider community are good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Good features in most lessons are the high levels of challenge and excitement provided, which enable children to enjoy their learning and to achieve their best. As one parent commented: 'Teaching skills are exemplary, giving my child the hunger to learn more.' In such lessons, teachers show strong subject knowledge. They use ICT effectively, to enhance children's knowledge and skills, and they match work well to meet the needs of different groups of learners. Weaker features include occasional lack of adherence to the timing of activities, resulting in a slowing in the pace of learning. Opportunities for children to work independently, to be involved in assessment and to be reminded of their targets as they progress in their learning are satisfactory. Teaching assistants, supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are skilful and effective in helping them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and is well matched to the needs of all children. Imaginative and creative whole-school planning links subjects well and provides children with a lively and interesting curriculum. In all years, children are given good opportunities to use the skills learned in English, mathematics and ICT in other subjects, for example in the world studies project. The science curriculum is not as well developed. Good partnerships, including links with other schools, provide the children with diverse opportunities to develop their talents effectively. The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of trips, including residential visits, and events such as Book Week and drama sessions led by visiting authors. These extend children's confidence and basic skills well. Education in personal safety and healthy lifestyles is developed effectively within the curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including sporting and creative clubs which are popular with the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support, enabling all children to progress well. One parent said of the staff: 'They are very dedicated and go beyond their normal duties in making sure our children feel safe, secure and valued.' Risk assessment systems are rigorous and effective. Health and safety and child protection procedures are fully in place, ensuring that children are safe at all times. Children have many opportunities to succeed through working both cooperatively and independently. Through praise and recognition of their work, much of which is displayed throughout the school, children's self-confidence and self-esteem are successfully developed. Whole-school assessment and tracking of their work in all subjects is not fully effective. Good levels of support provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure that they make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. In the last two years, there have been substantial, systematic improvements in various aspects of provision, most notably in children's personal development. These are now starting to be reflected in rising standards of achievement. This has been driven forward by the very clear vision and determination of the headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, in creating a strong identity for the school. Together, they have succeeded in building an enthusiastic team that has high expectations of the children. They correctly identify monitoring and assessment systems as relative weaknesses and are now tackling them. The role of subject coordinators has been targeted for development as they do not have a sharp understanding of the quality of work in their subjects. The school's systems for acquiring a more reliable overview of children's progress have improved

but procedures are not yet robust or consistent at subject level. Resources are used well to raise standards in teaching, learning and the curriculum and to provide a very attractive environment in which the children take pride. The school has been proactive in establishing productive links with parents and the local community. Governors carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily and are now developing their role as critical friends.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	2
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?	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?	2
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?	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	3
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	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

We visited your school this week to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being helpful when we asked you questions. We read on the notice-board next to the Sunshine Room all the good things about the 'Melling Child'. After our visit we can agree that they are very true.

We think there are lots of good things about your school but we also found out two ways in which your learning could be even better. The things we particularly like are these:

- children and staff are very friendly and you get on well with each other
- your school is very attractive with lots of your good work on the walls
- you said you enjoy school because there are lots of interesting things to do
- you are keen to answer in lessons, which helps you make good progress
- the teachers work hard to make your learning enjoyable
- you are enthusiastic for ICT and skilled in using it
- the school cares for you all and makes sure you are safe
- we also liked the good work done by the headteacher and her deputy.

We have asked the headteacher and the staff to:

- set targets for you in all subjects to improve your learning further
- ensure that your subject leaders have a clearer understanding of the work being done in their subjects by the other teachers.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. Please share this letter with the other children. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers make Melling Primary an even better place to be.