

Fender Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105039
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	287102
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs G Curry
Headteacher	Mrs Thelma Wiltshire
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	New Hey Road Woodchurch Wirral Merseyside CH49 8HB
Telephone number	0151 6770425
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school that serves an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's population is mainly White British, with very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fender Primary School is a good school with several outstanding features. Improvements over the last three years can be seen in the rising trend in pupils' achievement and standards. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the school is continuing to improve all aspects of its work. This is an exceptionally caring school, where the many complex and varied needs of the pupils are successfully met through the work of teachers and support staff together with outside agencies. High expectations encourage pupils to develop a desire to achieve: 'our teachers tell us we can do really well, and we want to work hard' is a view shared by the majority of pupils.

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are particularly low in language and communication. As a result of good quality provision they progress well during this year, especially in the development of their early communication skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 1. Although data from 2006 indicated a dip in standards at the end of Year 2, the school has now begun to address this. Systems for tracking progress have been improved so that any underachievement can be addressed by providing additional tailored support for those pupils who need it. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are below the national average, pupils make good progress overall. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well due to the high quality support provided and a number of these pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their needs and ability.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They have a secure understanding of healthy lifestyles and although bullying is rare, they are confident that staff will deal with any incidents effectively. Behaviour is good, both in classrooms and around the school. Positive attitudes towards learning are evident across the school and there is much emphasis on the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). This, combined with successful work on economic awareness, helps to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and the world of work. Pupils clearly articulate their future plans, which show that they are ambitious and highly motivated.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Typically, lessons include a variety of interesting activities that successfully engage and inspire pupils. Pupils are praised for their efforts and encouraged to attempt tasks with confidence: they respond to this enthusiastically. Effective use of interactive whiteboards helps to enhance learning and maintain a brisk pace, which in turn supports pupils' good behaviour in the classroom. A minority of lessons are satisfactory rather than good as the pace is occasionally too slow and there is too much emphasis on teacher-led activities rather than independent learning.

The recent move to a theme-based curriculum is already having a positive impact on pupils' learning, although this initiative is not yet fully embedded across the school.

Systems for pastoral care are outstanding. The school works very effectively in partnership with outside agencies to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met. All staff show a very high level of commitment to the welfare of the pupils and the great majority of parents are delighted with the school's work.

Very good leadership and management have helped to bring about the significant improvements since the last inspection. Rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision across the school inform good quality action planning, which clearly and accurately identifies priorities for future development. Although the school has a good understanding of its strengths

and weaknesses, it has been too modest in evaluating most aspects of the provision. The school uses resources well in order to achieve good value for money and the capacity for further improvement is also good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that it is all of at least good quality.
- Ensure that recent improvements to the curriculum are fully embedded across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because of good quality teaching and close monitoring of their performance. Standards have improved steadily over the past three years and current evidence indicates further improvement is taking place. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class is well below that expected for their age. Good quality care and teaching in the Foundation Stage help children to settle in to school life quickly and become confident learners. Although standards on entry to Year 1 are below national expectations, given the children's low starting point this represents good progress. The slight dip in the 2006 test results is being successfully tackled through additional support for pupils. As a consequence, current evidence shows that achievement for Key Stage 1 pupils is improving. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 2 due to good quality teaching, including a shared focus on 'assessment for learning'. Although pupils' standards at the end of Year 6 are below those expected for their age, the improving trend shows that the school is gradually closing the gap and moving towards the national average. This reflects the importance placed on high expectations for all pupils, which is a cornerstone of the school's work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils are taught to respect other faiths and cultures. Spiritual development is enhanced through uplifting assemblies. The school's motto, 'Learn to Live', is acted upon so that pupils are nurtured and valued as individuals: high self-esteem is promoted and all are encouraged to reach the highest standards they are capable of. Pupils treat visitors very well. They are polite and well behaved and very keen to describe their enjoyment of school life. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through a comprehensive programme of physical education each week combined with a healthy diet in school. The school has achieved considerable success in encouraging parents and carers to provide healthy packed lunches and the school council has been very active in improving the food choices in the dining room. School staff, in partnership with outside agencies, have worked hard to improve attendance, which is now close to the national average. Relationships with the community are excellent and pupils are keen and generous fund-raisers both locally and internationally. Parents hold the school in high regard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships between teachers and pupils are evident in all lessons. Teachers have high expectations and use praise and encouragement very effectively to build pupils' confidence.

As a consequence, pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn: several expressed the view that 'It's always good to have a go, even if you don't get it right first time!' Most lessons include a good variety of activities that help to keep pupils on task. However, in a small minority of lessons the pace is not sufficiently brisk and teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to learn independently. Support staff are deployed well and help to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and constructive: teachers' written comments make clear to pupils what they need to do next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has recently started to move towards a thematic approach to the curriculum, with much emphasis on creativity. There is already firm evidence that this new method is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Staff are encouraged by the initiative and welcome the opportunity to explore how certain concepts and skills may be taught, whilst pupils are inspired by the imaginative approach and clearly enjoy their learning as a result. For example, one group of pupils developed their knowledge and understanding of a variety of subjects through a topic on 'Circus', which included a very popular and enjoyable workshop on circus skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy their Spanish lessons, led by specialist teachers from a local secondary school. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of activities, including after school clubs and workshops, some of which are attended by parents. Enrichment activities include residential trips and activities led by visitors: for example, some particularly good work has been carried out in conjunction with a local artist, resulting in very high quality displays of art work. These opportunities contribute a great deal to pupils' personal development and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff are extremely committed to the welfare of their pupils and devote a great deal of time and effort to their care and support. The school works very closely with outside agencies, including social workers and health professionals, and the work carried out through this partnership is an outstanding feature of the school's provision. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. A range of strategies, including additional support and booster classes for identified pupils, ensures that the needs of all are very effectively met. Attention to detail in the planning of teaching and monitoring of pupils' work reflects a whole school commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all learners. As a result pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and appropriate support is organised. This helps them to make good progress, matching that of their classmates. Looked-after children make excellent progress both in their academic performance and personal development. The school's very good use of data on pupils' progress enables staff to provide high quality academic guidance: as a result, pupils are fully aware of individual targets for their future development. Links with the local high school are excellent and pupils are well prepared to move on.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong dedication of leaders and managers at all levels has been a major factor in bringing about the improvements evident in the school's work over recent years. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in driving improvement, through a very

thorough and rigorous process of monitoring, evaluation and action planning. All staff take their responsibilities seriously and carry out their roles with great care. Middle managers, some of whom are relatively new to their role, are having an increasing influence on bringing about improvements in their subjects. A well-established system of performance management helps to focus teachers on raising standards and achievement as well as identifying professional development needs, which are then addressed through a range of training activities. The whole of the school workforce is managed well and support staff are included in performance management arrangements. Governance is good: members of the governing body assist school leaders by discussing issues in detail and are fully committed to all aspects of the school's work, in particular the role of the school within the local community.

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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?	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	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	3
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	1
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?	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.

Annex A

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	1
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	1
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 very much for making us feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

We think that Fender Primary is a good school with some excellent features. You told us that your teachers are always praising you and encouraging you to 'have a go', and we saw this in your lessons. You told us that your teachers try to make the lessons fun and exciting and we were impressed that so many of you said that mathematics was your favourite subject! We can see that because you are working hard in mathematics your test results are getting better all the time. The artwork around school was absolutely lovely: we enjoyed hearing about your work with the local artist and you are lucky to have the beautiful butterfly sculpture in the playground. We attended one of your assemblies and enjoyed it very much. You have done so well in raising money for the children of Chernobyl and also for the local charity.

One of the best things about your school is that it is such a caring place. All the staff want you to feel happy and settled so that you learn well. The teachers, support staff and the school nurse all work very well together to make sure you are very well cared for in school. You told us that there is always someone to talk to, and it is also good that you care for each other so well.

We know that some of you have been doing some work based on themes such as 'chocolate' and 'treasure'. The circus workshop looked like great fun, and you told us how much you enjoyed it! We were impressed with the quality of work you had produced on these themes and we have asked the school to consider how they might extend this type of work across the whole school. We have also suggested that the staff think about how they can make all of your lessons as good as the very best.

One of the things we enjoyed the most during our time in your school was hearing about your ambitions for the future. It is fantastic that you want to work hard so that you can follow the career of your choice. Your headteacher and all the staff are there to help you achieve this: of course, you have to do your bit by continuing to 'have a go' and taking on board your teachers' advice on how to improve your work even more!