



Heswall St Peter's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105079
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287118
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
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 address	Thurstaston Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Heswall, Wirral
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside CH60 4SA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 3422556
Number on roll (school)	312	Fax number	0151 3427940
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev J Gibbs
		Headteacher	Mrs J Russell
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Many pupils in this larger than average sized school come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Much smaller than average proportions are entitled to free school meals, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or speak any language other than English. Most are of White British heritage. The school has a 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

This school provides pupils with a satisfactory education and has several good features. The school has been strongly and devotedly led by a long-serving headteacher, who will retire at the end of this term with the great affection and respect of the parents and the local community.

Pupils behave well and enjoy their time in school, both in lessons and when participating in a wide range of sporting and aesthetic out-of-class activities. Pupils especially enjoy the arts, and many participate in the school choir and orchestra. Because they have a voice in the school, pupils are influential in determining school lunch menus and break-time snacks and in how the playground is organised and equipped. They take responsibility willingly and seriously, acting as mentors, both in and out of the classroom, as buddies and as play leaders at lunchtime. The sensitive care and support pupils receive contribute well to their good personal development, to their relationships and to the school's strong ethos. The school is a friendly place and good quality displays of pupils' work enhance the environment despite the somewhat worn internal fabric of the building.

Standards are consistently high throughout the school. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Over the last two years, the performance of Year 6 pupils in English has been weak, especially that of the more able girls. Led by the newly appointed deputy headteacher the school has taken rigorous action to improve all-round achievement and especially that of the more able girls in writing. It is too early to judge the full impact on performance of these initiatives but there are early signs of improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of effective teaching and support which matches their needs well. Although few in number, many of these pupils attain expected standards by the time they leave Year 6. The consistently good teaching and learning in the Year 1 and 2 classes means that pupils make good progress. Although there is some good and some outstanding teaching in Years 3 to 6, the overall quality is satisfactory because the needs of the high proportion of more able pupils, especially girls, until very recently have not been sufficiently met, especially in writing. In the Reception classes, some weaknesses in the curriculum mean that children's achievement is satisfactory rather than good, despite much effective teaching.

While enriched by many interesting and relevant activities, the planned curriculum lacks sufficient detail about how key skills can be taught across all subjects. The leadership and management of the school have undergone much disruption over the last two years; this has coincided with a drop in performance. The headteacher suffered a lengthy absence, the school was without a deputy headteacher and within a short time lost key senior members of staff due to promotions. Despite the best efforts of governors and temporary leaders, there has been less rigorous checking on pupils' and teachers' performance. The plans for improvement lack sufficient specific focus on raising pupils' achievement. The recent key appointments have put the school in a position to move forward again. It currently has an accurate view of its effectiveness

and of its provision. The school has dealt appropriately with issues raised as a result of its last inspection and its present position indicates a satisfactory capacity to improve further. There is satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing of the more able pupils in Years 3 to 6, especially that of girls, so that it reaches the same high standards as in other subjects.
- Make sure that all teaching in Years 3 to 6 is consistently good.
- Improve the way the curriculum is planned so that it is clear how key skills can be taught across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. They enter the school with well above expected standards and at each stage of national assessment thereafter, they maintain these standards. Some weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum limit children's achievements to satisfactory. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 results in pupils' good achievements.

The school has recognised the lower performance of the more able pupils in writing in Years 3 to 6, especially girls, and has analysed closely just what these pupils need to do to improve. Managers have very recently implemented more rigorous systems to track pupils' progress regularly so that achievement improves. Pupils achieve well in science, art and design, physical education and music. Those who find learning more difficult have good support and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are taught to care for each other and to be aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones at playtimes. Behaviour in school is good and pupils are happy and feel safe and secure. Attendance is good and pupils say they really enjoy school. They are knowledgeable about how to achieve healthy lifestyles, for example by joining in the good range of sporting activities during and after school and eating well. This is reflected in the Healthy School Award. The active school council gives pupils a voice in decision making and they are confident that their views are taken into account. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to protect the environment. Pupils' good basic skills prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although there are also some areas of good and occasionally outstanding teaching, the recent underachievement of the more able pupils indicates that there have been some relative weaknesses in teaching. When teaching is strong, tasks set are well matched to pupils' needs and interests, the pace of learning is brisk and pupils are well supported to achieve their learning objectives. Where lessons are not so successful, teachers do not provide sufficient guidance to help pupils achieve well, nor do they consistently set work that matches the needs of the more able pupils.

Although much of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, the curriculum has some weaknesses and this reduces the children's general progress. Teaching assistants and adult helpers make an effective contribution to the quality of teaching and learning across the school and are well deployed in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is wide ranging and effectively promotes good basic skills. The programme to promote pupils' personal and health education contributes well to their positive attitudes and good relationships. Because of some recent underachievement, the school is now beginning to develop a more finely tuned response to the pupils' needs, especially those of the more able girls. Although the Foundation Stage curriculum is effective in developing early literacy skills, it does not always fully exploit opportunities to integrate areas of children's learning and this limits their achievement. Visits and visitors to school and the wide range of after-school activities in sport and creative arts, including dance, enrich the curriculum well. Residential visits for pupils in Years 2 and 6 build their confidence and promote their social skills well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know pupils well and work successfully to promote their physical and emotional well-being. There are good programmes to help pupils understand moral and social issues and to share worries or problems. These, along with the good-humoured relationships with staff, ensure that pupils enjoy school and know how to keep safe. Induction arrangements for Reception children help them settle quickly. Year 6 pupils are well prepared for moving to the high school. Arrangements for child protection, vetting staff and health and safety are in place. Some promising refinements to the way pupils' progress is recorded and tracked have recently been implemented. These systems are well thought through but are not yet consistently used in all classes. Consequently, the impact on overall achievement is at an early stage. Pupils are actively involved in assessing how well they are doing against their targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher and other key staff make a significant impact in establishing a caring and friendly ethos. Pupils' personal development is promoted well and this ensures that they become effective young citizens. The lack of continuity in leadership and management caused by lengthy absences and the promotion of key personnel has meant that sustained rigour in ensuring the best possible performance has been somewhat lacking. This has contributed to some recent underachievement by the more able pupils which is now being addressed by the school.

There are effective partnerships with parents, outside agencies and other schools and colleges which have contributed well to pupils' learning, especially in the arts and in sport. The good links with a special school have enhanced the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a provision that is well managed and results in those pupils' good achievements.

Subject leaders are fully committed to their roles and are very enthusiastic about developing their curriculum areas. However, in line with the whole-school improvement plans their subject action plans insufficiently focus on exactly what it is pupils need to do better. Governors are both supportive and challenging. They are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and their clear insight into the qualities required by their new headteacher demonstrates their perceptiveness.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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	2
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?	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?	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	3
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	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 making us so welcome during the days we spent in your school. We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to share with you what is good in your satisfactory school.

What is good about your school:

- you behave well and enjoy your lessons and the other interesting activities the school offers
- your headteacher and other staff make sure that the school is a warm and friendly place and this means you get on well together and feel safe and secure
- you work hard to reach high standards in reading, mathematics, science, art and design and music
- those of you who find your work more difficult than most make good progress.

There are some things we have asked the school to do to help to improve the school:

- to make sure that those who find work a bit easier than others, especially the girls, make better progress in their writing
- to make sure that the things children do in the Reception classes suit them better and help them to learn more
- to be clearer about how the important skills you need to learn are taught in all your subjects.

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