

Newton Westpark Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106422
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	287510
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	133
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Miss Vivien Birchall
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Tennyson Avenue Leigh Lancashire WN7 5JY
Telephone number	01942 606834
Fax number	01942 604787

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals are twice the national average, indicating the degree of social disadvantage in the area served by the school. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are of other White, Indian or travelling backgrounds. All of the pupils speak English.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. A strength of the school is its success in helping almost a third of its pupils to overcome social, emotional or learning difficulties. The calm and purposeful atmosphere, in which pupils behave well and care for each other, is testament to the good level of care, support and guidance provided. In particular, the most vulnerable pupils are safeguarded and very sensitively nurtured. Pupils' personal development is good. Their views are welcomed and they are frequently involved in making decisions. They are continually encouraged to understand the consequences of their actions. These principles help them to carry out their responsibilities in an exemplary fashion. Pupils are being helped to understand what they need to do to improve. This is gradually helping them to raise their achievement. The school curriculum is satisfactory, although there are weaknesses in the investigational aspects of mathematics and science. Pupils receive a good grounding in health and social education. Consequently, they value healthy lifestyles and are extremely well aware of how to keep safe.

Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory by Year 6. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class where the provision made for young children is outstanding. They achieve extremely well from a starting point that is well below that expected for children of this age. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good, whereas in Years 3 to 6 their achievement is satisfactory overall and fluctuates between classes and within subjects. Pupils' attainment overall is broadly average across Years 3 to 6, but standards and achievement in mathematics are not as good as they should be. However, standards have been gradually rising and are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, excellent in Reception and good in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is evident in the variable quality of pupils' written work. In the junior classes, the work provided is not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' different learning needs. These factors impede some pupils' learning and result in uneven rates of progress.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff and governors are united in their determination to do their best for the pupils and improve their achievement. Many strategies have been introduced which have improved behaviour, attendance and writing. However, checking the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning is not sufficiently rigorous to identify the reasons for uneven progress. Senior staff have been too optimistic in judging all aspects of the school's work to be good or better when, in fact, most of them are satisfactory. Their judgements have been influenced by their perceptions of how pupils have coped with their difficulties and improved from where they started, rather than on evidence arising from more objective information, such as assessment data. Despite this, school self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school's strengths have been correctly identified and work is underway to remedy the weaknesses in mathematics. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, which indicates that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in Key Stage 2.

- Inject greater rigour into monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to eliminate inconsistencies in teaching and in pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter school with attainment well below that expected for their age. Although they achieve very well in the Foundation Stage, one third of them do not reach the learning goals expected by the end of the Reception year. Good achievement in Years 1 and 2 helps pupils to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. The rate of achievement slows in Key Stage 2. Achievement in English and science is satisfactory, though uneven. Standards in these subjects are average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils reach their targets in English. However, in mathematics, because they make slow progress, they miss their targets and standards are below average by the end of Key Stage 2. To help raise achievement in mathematics, weaknesses such as pupils' problem-solving skills are being targeted. There are signs of improvement. The 2007 test results are 10% higher than in 2006, but there is still some way to go to reach the levels expected nationally. The achievement of boys and girls, the more able pupils and those from minority ethnic groups are all similar and broadly satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and often exceed their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their self-esteem grows and they develop a strong sense of fairness and concern for others. Pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own is not as strong, though they strongly disapprove of any form of bullying or racism. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school and describe their school as 'friendly'. For the most part, they enjoy their time in school and are eager to participate in the many sporting activities, which they say 'keep them fit'. Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Their awareness of potential dangers such as drugs, alcohol and smoking, and how to avoid them, is excellent. Pupils make an exemplary contribution to the school community by acting as 'buddies', play leaders and school councillors. Despite the weaknesses in numeracy, pupils' skills in English and information and communication technology (ICT) are secure. They are being well prepared for the future in many other respects. They work well both in teams and independently and gain valuable insights into making financial decisions by working on enterprise projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children learn rapidly in the Foundation Stage because of the highly stimulating and challenging activities provided. Very effective teamwork and well structured teaching in Years 1 and 2 help pupils to learn profitably. Pupils are very well managed in all classes, and this creates a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. The 'whole-class' teaching within lessons is largely effective. Teachers' clear explanations, sprinkled with humour, capture pupils' interests, and skilful questioning makes them think. Teaching in Years 3 to 6, although satisfactory, is inconsistent. For example, teaching in English is good in Year 5 and very good in science in

Year 6. However, these subjects' strengths are not evident in other junior classes. Although pupils' learning is assessed thoroughly, the extent to which the information is used to provide challenging tasks, well matched to pupils' different learning needs, is better in some junior classes than others. In mathematics, for example, pupils do not always understand the tasks they are given and make too many errors, which undermines their learning. Similarly, teachers are not equally successful in ensuring that pupils produce accurate, well presented and well organised work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum covers all subjects and provides many additional experiences, increasing pupils' enjoyment of school. The excellent curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage enables them to make the best possible start. Throughout the school, the curriculum is sensitively adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning and emotional difficulties. A very successful programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes positively to pupils' personal development. Provision in English, ICT and science is satisfactory, although pupils' scientific investigation skills are not developed evenly. Weaknesses in provision in mathematics, particularly the way calculation skills are taught, are receiving attention.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The needs of the most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well understood. A nurture group has been created to provide sanctuary, warmth and understanding for pupils with emotional difficulties. A very strong partnership between key members of staff and local health and educational professionals ensures that many of the barriers to learning are removed successfully. The school meets all requirements to supervise, protect and ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The level of guidance pupils receive is satisfactory and improving. Teachers' marking of pupils' written work does not always show pupils what they need to do to improve. However, pupils are given individual targets to work towards. They are becoming increasingly adept in evaluating the success of their own learning. These promising strategies have been introduced only recently and have not yet had time to impact on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has the confidence and trust of parents, staff and governors. A number of very effective strategies have been introduced to promote pupils' safety, well-being, good behaviour and attendance and to ensure that they are fully included in all activities. It has proved more difficult for senior staff to raise achievement in Years 3 to 6, particularly in mathematics. The school has now involved the local authority in finding the way forward. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school is satisfactory, but there are shortcomings. Analysing assessments of pupils' learning to identify and reverse any faltering progress is now a strong feature. The school's main strengths and weaknesses are identified and form the basis of an adequate improvement plan. However, checking lessons and pupils' work is not done frequently or rigorously enough to reveal the specific reasons why teaching is inconsistent and pupils' progress is uneven in Key Stage 2. Sharing teachers' expertise is not fully effective in

improving pupils' learning in all classes. Governors are very supportive but are only just beginning to hold the school to account.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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	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	1
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?	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.

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	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	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

Inspection of Newton Westpark Primary School, Leigh, WN7 5JY

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed my visit because of the polite, friendly and helpful way you answered my questions. My judgement is that while your school is satisfactory, there are some stronger features.

Children in the Reception class make an excellent start and the classroom is buzzing with excitement. Good teaching in the infant classes helps pupils to make good progress and reach the standards expected for their age. Teaching is satisfactory in the junior classes but there is some good teaching as well. In English and in science most pupils make satisfactory progress and reach the standards expected. However, in mathematics, progress is slower and standards are below average.

Teachers and support staff take good care of you and keep you safe. They help you to understand why good attendance and showing respect and consideration towards others matters. You repay the staff by behaving well and helping others. The play leaders and school council members do this particularly well. Older pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and know a great deal about keeping safe.

The way the school is led and managed is satisfactory with some good features. The headteacher and staff have created a happy school and are always trying to make it better by checking your progress and providing extra support to help you to catch up if you fall behind. Occasionally, lessons are observed and your written work is checked but this is not done enough to ensure that everyone makes good progress.

To make your school better still, I have three recommendations.

- I have asked junior teachers to try their very best to help to improve your achievement in mathematics. You can help by working quickly and completing the extension tasks.
- I have asked teachers to make sure that the tasks you are asked to complete are at exactly the right level in every lesson and to always encourage you to produce careful, accurate and well presented work.
- I have asked senior staff to check thoroughly what is happening in classrooms and look in your books to make sure that improvements are taking place.