



Tarvin Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111110
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288859
Inspection date 28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Heath Drive
School category	Community		Tarvin, Chester
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cheshire CH3 8LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01829 740399
Number on roll (school)	203	Fax number	01829 740853
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Joan Trowell
		Headteacher	Mrs Jean Nield
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Tarvin is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school situated in the village of Tarvin, near Chester. The majority of its pupils live within the school's catchment area which consists of Tarvin village and surrounding districts. Pupils come from generally favourable social and economic backgrounds and a much lower than average proportion are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and none are learning English as an additional language. The school is accredited with Activemark Gold, Artsmark Gold and Investor in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tarvin Primary is a good school with some outstanding features of which it can be rightly proud. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school successfully promotes pupils' self-esteem, confidence and independent thinking. Its outstanding curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of carefully planned visits and visitors to enrich pupils' experiences and contribute to the sense of enthusiasm and excitement for learning which is evident in the school.

Pupils have a good start to their education and settle well in the Foundation Stage. They make good progress during their time at the school so that the standards attained by the end of Year 6 are above the national average. Pupils' achievements in writing were not as strong as in reading, mathematics and science in the 2006 assessments and tests for 7 and 11 year olds. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve writing skills across all subjects. Also, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in mathematics at the end of Year 6 was below the school's own high expectations in 2006. Steps have been taken to provide additional challenge to more able mathematicians so that targets for 2007 are likely to be met.

Pupils enjoy school very much and attendance is excellent. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They show consideration for each other and respect for adults. The school provides very good care, guidance and support for its pupils and this is reflected in the excellent pastoral care and high quality relationships between pupils and adults.

The overall quality of teaching and learning across the school is good, and some lessons are outstanding. In most lessons, pupils are keen to engage with the wide variety of well planned activities, and clearly enjoy their learning. Staff make good use of resources, particularly information and communication technology (ICT), to support teaching and learning.

Leadership and management are good overall, with some excellent features. The strong leadership and vision of the headteacher are shared by a very capable and enthusiastic senior leadership team whose skills complement each other well, leading to effective teamwork. The school uses a range of assessment information and analyses effectively to track pupils' progress. School development planning is thorough and based upon the school's accurate self-evaluation. The leadership is aware that it could be further improved by providing a more concise evaluation of the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement.

The school provides good value for money. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build upon the school's existing strategies for improving pupils' writing skills so that a higher proportion reach above average standards.

- Raise the proportion of more able pupils attaining the higher level in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' skills on entry to school are broadly average and represent the full range of abilities. Most children have attended the on-site pre-school nursery provision which is privately run and good links exist between this and the Reception class, which make up the Foundation Stage. Effective induction into Reception class and the good provision there enables pupils to settle and achieve well. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the majority of pupils are meeting the learning goals expected of them and a good proportion are exceeding these. This good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 pupils are consistently attaining above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in writing in the 2006 assessments was nearer to average and therefore not as strong as in mathematics and reading. The impact of the school's recent actions to improve writing across all areas of the curriculum, and in particular for boys, is beginning to show in pupils' work across the school.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is consistently above average in the national tests for English, mathematics and science. More pupils reached the higher level in reading than did so in writing. Excellent 2005 results included a significant proportion of pupils who reached the higher level in each of the core subjects. Whilst standards remained above average overall, the 2006 results reflected a slight drop in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels. This was affected by a small group of pupils who narrowly missed their target level during the mathematics test. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level was still just above the national average, representing good progress overall. The school has taken action to support and stretch those Year 6 pupils who are capable of reaching higher standards in mathematics, and its targets for 2007 are challenging but achievable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and attendance is well above the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have respect for and awareness of the beliefs of others and are willing to express views on their own personal values. They have a keen awareness of rights and responsibilities. One of the reasons for this is the way in which pupils are enabled to make a real contribution to the school community, use their initiative and willingly take on a range of responsibilities. For example, the school council carries out its duties with diligence, meets regularly and represents the views of all pupils well, members reporting back to their classes after meetings. In this way pupils report they have a real say in what goes on in the school, and a number of actions have taken place as a result of consultation with pupils:

playground improvements and equipment; the development of a 'litter group' and 'wildlife group'; and the painting of the toilets. In this way, pupils make a very good contribution to their community and understand how they can make a difference. This is also clear in pupils' commitment to raising funds for good causes and charities. Some pupils have suggested particular causes after reading about them and being moved to put a fundraising proposal to the headteacher and school council.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect on and consider their own actions and the points of view of others. Self-esteem and confidence levels are high because pupils are encouraged to acknowledge their own strengths and praise the good qualities of their classmates. Older pupils were able to explain to the inspector how this, along with the responsibilities they take on, prepares them well for future life outside school.

Negative behaviour or bullying incidents are very rare occurrences. Despite some concerns expressed by a small minority of parents in the inspection questionnaire, pupils report that any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively and most parents agree. Very good behaviour and attitudes to learning were observed during the inspection.

Because of a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, pupils are aware of, and able to make, healthy choices. This is enhanced through the provision of healthy snacks and meals, and a good emphasis on physical education and outdoor activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are highly committed and plan their work thoroughly. They benefit from good quality training and development opportunities which are applied effectively within the classroom. Recent analysis as part of a 'Well-Being' project shows that teacher absence levels are extremely low. This staffing stability, along with professional development opportunities leading to continuous improvement in teaching skills, contributes to pupils' good achievement.

A common feature of lessons is the teachers' ability to link subjects together so that pupils can learn in a meaningful way. Teachers also emphasise the application of thinking skills so that pupils are able to apply these confidently to solve problems and work well in collaboration with others. All staff make good use of praise and encouragement to motivate pupils to try their best. The positive learning environment is further enhanced by excellent quality displays of children's work in a range of subjects. Teachers are skilled in using the interactive whiteboards installed in each classroom, and resources are well chosen to enhance and enliven pupils' learning.

Outstanding lessons are characterised by particularly knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching which moves along at a brisk pace and has high expectations and levels of

challenge. In these lessons, pupils are absorbed in their work and make excellent progress.

Teaching assistants and other staff are deployed effectively to support pupils in their learning, either within the whole class situation or as part of a smaller intervention group. Most pupils are well aware of their targets and teachers' marking often supports these to ensure that pupils have a good idea of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils extremely well. The school helps pupils make real sense of what they are learning by making very effective links between subjects. The curriculum is enlivened by the inclusion of themed weeks or days, for example those devoted to art, design and technology, Chinese New Year, science and multiculturalism. Visual arts continue to be a strength across the curriculum and make an excellent contribution to the vibrant and attractive learning environment in classes and around the school.

Visitors have included artists, poets, craftspeople and performers. Day trips as part of topic studies are very popular with the pupils. The school arranges a good number of residential trips which the pupils also find exciting and enjoyable. Many of these are made possible by willing contributions from parents, but are also subsidised by the school wherever possible. For example, the school has recently been successful in its bid for grant funding towards the trip to France.

Pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are developed well within a rich variety of activities across subjects. High quality provision in art, music, dance and drama enhance pupils' motivation and they respond well to the many opportunities to work practically and creatively. Key Stage 2 pupils learn French and Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to attend a residential trip there. The school provides a 'maths challenge' class for more able pupils and smaller group intervention classes for those who are finding their work difficult. It is involved in the 'Day A Week' school for gifted and talented pupils and the school benefits from having one of its staff teaching there and bringing ideas back to use in all classes.

A good range of after-school clubs ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities. The school emphasises the importance of health and fitness and has improved the outdoor provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage and for all pupils in the school grounds.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils with a number of exemplary features. Policies and procedures for child protection are thorough and meet the latest guidelines, as do those for health and safety and risk assessment. In fact, some Year 6 pupils themselves are involved in checking the classrooms as 'Health and Safety Officers' using county guidance.

Pastoral care is excellent as a result of high quality relationships between pupils and all adults and the caring ethos which exists in the school. Very good induction procedures for children entering the Reception class, including home visits, help them to settle in quickly and feel secure. Transition into high school is effectively supported through a range of activities which includes a residential trip with pupils from partner primary schools.

The school promotes effective communication and partnerships with parents and carers. A small minority of parents who returned the inspection questionnaire did not feel that their views are fully taken into account. However, evidence seen during the inspection does not support this view, and the majority of parents are very supportive and appreciative of the school's work. Some conflicting opinions were also expressed regarding the quality and frequency of homework for pupils, and the school regularly reviews its homework policy in the light of feedback from parents.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teachers and highly skilled assistants so that their progress is carefully monitored.

Higher-attaining pupils are suitably challenged in lessons, although a few narrowly missed their targets in the 2006 tests. Overall, pupils are supported very well in their learning and are guided to make further progress through effective use of target-setting and assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some excellent features. The headteacher is a strong and dedicated leader who is ably assisted by an equally committed and capable deputy headteacher. Along with a further two senior leaders, the skills of this team complement each other well and contribute to a sense of energy, enthusiasm and high expectations. They share a clear vision for the future of the school with the intent of further raising standards and achievement for all.

The leadership team is aware of the school's strengths and areas where it could improve. Inspection judgements closely matched those of the school itself. The overall quality of the school's self-evaluation is good, and can improve further as middle leaders and governors seek to develop a deeper understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The quality of improvement planning is good; documents show well-thought out priorities and detailed action plans, although these are over-lengthy in places.

The leadership team undertakes thorough analysis of assessment information for all groups of pupils. This is shared with staff and used to inform target-setting and the tracking of pupils' progress. For example, following analysis of the 2006 Key Stage 2 results the senior team were able to identify general skills which pupils needed to develop in order to reach higher levels of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This resulted in staff training and discussions which informed teachers' planning. A survey of pupils' views on writing, together with the monitoring

of literacy plans, contributed to the development of actions to improve this area of the school's work. This excellent aspect of the school's leadership and management is now being extended to develop the skills of foundation subject leaders.

School governors carry out all statutory responsibilities and are supportive of the school and its leadership. They are kept well informed by the headteacher, and meetings take place with subject leaders to improve governors' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

There is a strong emphasis on continuing professional development for staff and this pays dividends in the high levels of confidence and skills of teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff. The school uses external agencies and partnerships extremely well to support its provision. For example, Tarvin is part of two groups of schools which are actively involved in developing pupils' thinking skills and emotional literacy. The school has benefited from the input of local authority advisers and consultants in providing training and advice on subject developments and leadership and management.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. A number of staffing changes since that time have been managed effectively and standards of attainment continue to be consistently above average. Improvements to the school building have been made, including the recently renewed computer suite, and interactive whiteboards are installed in each class. These facilities are being used well by staff to enhance pupils' learning.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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?	1
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	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	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 making me feel so welcome when I spent a day in your school recently. I enjoyed joining your lessons (and the School Council meeting!) and was very interested to hear about all the things that you do and what you think about your school. I could see that Tarvin is a good school with much to be proud of, and some things that are outstanding. These are some of the particular strengths I found:

- you really enjoy coming to school and love the excellent curriculum which makes sure you get lots of interesting lessons, trips and visitors
- you make good progress and reach high standards in your work
- your personal development is excellent - this means that attendance is high, behaviour and attitudes are very good, and that you are growing into confident and thoughtful young people who like to take on responsibilities and help each other and the community
- relationships are excellent and all of the adults in school take really good care of you so that you feel safe and happy
- teaching is good, and you also get very good support from teaching assistants
- your headteacher and leaders set a good example and give very clear direction so that everyone knows what to do to make the school even better.

To help make Tarvin an outstanding school we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to carry on making improvements to your writing skills, and to help those of you who are really good at mathematics to achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6.