



Murdishaw West Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111174
Local Authority Halton
Inspection number 288881
Inspection dates 27–28 September 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	Barnfield Avenue
School category	Community		Murdishaw, Runcorn
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire WA7 6EP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 711254
Number on roll (school)	180	Fax number	01928 710655
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs G Wilson
		Headteacher	Mrs Katherine Dukes
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is in an area of high social and economic deprivation. It is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ). There is a much higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a high proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. Pupils are overwhelmingly from White British backgrounds. The school has been awarded National Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is improving, a judgement that is in line with the school's own view. Most parents rightly feel that their children are happy and that the school prepares them well for the future. An effective programme of personal, social and health education ensures that most pupils behave sensibly, that they get on well together and that they make sensible choices about their diet and taking exercise. They are well cared for, especially the most vulnerable children. Pupils have a voice in the school and openly express their feelings and opinions. For example, they approve of the recent change to mixed age classes in Years 3 and 4 and in Years 5 and 6, saying 'We don't mess about with our friends as much, get on with our work better and make more friends with children in other year groups.'

Children have a good start in the Reception class making good progress because of well focused teaching and mostly effective provision. Although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average in Years 1 to 6, satisfactory teaching leads to pupils making satisfactory progress. Achievement is best in science because of the practically based curriculum. It is least good in mathematics because there are some weaknesses in teaching. Pupils with the most severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make satisfactory progress. However, pupils whose abilities are just below average do not progress as well because they are not adequately supported.

Within an overall satisfactory curriculum, pupils enjoy enriching activities in and out of school, including sports clubs and French language teaching, which contribute well to their academic and personal development. However, the limited opportunities for outside play for Foundation Stage children restrict aspects of their physical and mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Very recent and radical changes to the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 already show evidence of improved learning. Throughout the school, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' speaking skills. This makes a major contribution to a significant minority being unable to read and write fluently.

Leadership, management and value for money the school provides are satisfactory. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. The school's very effective use of funding from the EAZ and the Behaviour Improvement Programme to employ learning mentors has contributed well to good improvements in attendance, punctuality and behaviour. There is better assessment and improved security. The enhanced playground facilities were initiated by pupils and staff. Parents and pupils report that break and lunchtimes are positive experiences. There have been steady improvements in standards and in aspects of teaching. However, subject leaders are still not as well focused as they could be on raising pupils' achievements and standards.

Since the appointment a year ago of the current headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher, good systems have been implemented to check on pupils' progress and to monitor the effectiveness of individual teachers and managers. As a result,

weaknesses are being systematically addressed with resulting improvements evident. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards, pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in mathematics.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to speak at length to help them improve their reading and writing.
- Ensure that those pupils with below average ability but who do not have significant learning difficulties are supported more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class with well below expected standards and with poor communication skills. Because they are taught well they make good progress but they still enter Year 1 with below expected standards in all aspects of their communication, language and literacy, in their ability to calculate, recognise shape, measure accurately and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In their other areas of learning they attain the targets set nationally for them. In Years 1 to 6 most pupils make expected progress because they are taught satisfactorily. They make good progress in their personal and social development because the curriculum and teaching are good in this aspect. Pupils do not progress well enough in mathematics because of some weaknesses in teaching. Most pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress but those with just below average ability, in Years 3 to 6, make poorer progress because of inadequate support. Standards in Years 1 to 6 gradually improved over the period 2003 to 2005 and most pupils meet the targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe. Successful efforts, particularly by learning mentors, have improved attendance and punctuality. Many pupils are considerate of others, adopt safe, sensible practices in moving around the school and have a keen attitude to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around the school. Staff, together with the learning mentors, work very hard to encourage appropriate behaviour in all pupils. Pupils get on well with their peers and with adults. The school council represents an enthusiastic voice for pupils and has clear ideas of how to make school even better. Pupils are well aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle: one child explained, 'All the junk food has been thrown away; we have fruit and toast for snacks and we drink milk or water.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make a positive contribution to their wider community through charity fund-raising. The school has received an anti-bullying award in recognition of its commitment to pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils share information about peer mediation with other schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning are good in the Reception class and are satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Teaching in mathematics has weaknesses which result in pupils underachieving. In many mathematics lessons, teachers do not expect enough of the pupils, do not reinforce basic number facts sufficiently well and do not develop pupils' understanding of mathematical vocabulary enough.

In most lessons, relationships are positive, resources used well and teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning and to engage pupils. Most pupils enjoy lessons in which they are actively engaged and make their best progress when helping each other and discussing ideas. However, too few opportunities are provided for them to develop their speaking skills. Although teachers encourage pupils to speak openly and at length in personal, social, health and citizenship lessons, where teaching is good, this is lacking in many other lessons. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' ability to read and write fluently. Pupils know the targets set for them to improve and take pride in tracking their own progress. The good support provided by teaching assistants and learning mentors helps the most vulnerable pupils and those with the severest learning difficulties to achieve satisfactorily. However, support staff are thinly spread and there is a lack of sufficient support for the just below average ability pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Innovative changes to the organisation of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. All statutory requirements are met. Work is enriched by visitors to school, educational visits and celebration assemblies. Good partnerships support the school's mission to provide its pupils with good opportunities to develop knowledge and skills. Weaknesses in the curriculum are the lack of emphasis placed on speaking and listening skills within lessons and the limited range of opportunities for outdoor learning for younger pupils. The school has already made plans for improvements to the outdoor provision. Pupils' personal safety and citizenship education are developed effectively. Support for pupils with the severest learning difficulties is well planned and sensitive to their needs. One child told the inspectors, 'I have dyslexia and my teacher helps me a lot. I have another try if I get spellings wrong.' However, the needs of pupils with just below average ability are not fully met. Pupils say they enjoy very much the activities and rewards provided for them: 'Getting rewarded makes us more determined to achieve things.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Under the guidance of the headteacher, the school has made recent improvements to ensure that the school environment is safe and secure. Health and safety procedures are effective. Secure arrangements are in place for safeguarding pupils and promoting personal development and well-being. Staff are involved in risk assessment procedures prior to educational visits. Procedures for child protection are robust and both parents and children express high levels of trust in staff. Positive relationships between children and adults ensure that children feel happy at school and know there is someone to whom they can turn if they need help. Extra help for those pupils who have the most difficulties with learning or behaviour is effectively implemented by a committed support team. Most pupils know how to improve their work from their individual or group targets in literacy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher has introduced rigorous management systems to evaluate pupils' progress and to check the effectiveness of individual teachers. As a result, improvements in pupils' standards and in the quality of teaching are already evident. Changes to the curriculum have enhanced provision for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and strategies to improve attendance, punctuality and behaviour have been largely successful. Attendance has improved significantly to just above the national average. The staff work well as a team and liaise well with outside agencies to support the improvements listed above and parents have become increasingly involved in their children's learning. The school knows itself well and is realistic about its weaknesses, planning effectively for improvement. Leaders, including governors, are aware of some of the shortcomings in quality and provision but demonstrate a determination to improve the quality of teaching of mathematics, the outside provision for younger children and the effectiveness of subject leaders in improving pupils' standards and achievements.

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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	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?	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	3

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	3
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?	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	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

Thank you for making us welcome during the days we spent in your school. We really appreciated the way in which you chatted to us. We would like to share with you those things we thought were really good about your school and those things we felt it could do better.

What we thought was good about your school:

- the good start children make in the Reception class
- the way in which staff look after you when you are upset or hurt, especially the learning mentors who work with those of you who find behaving well difficult
- the interesting activities the school provides for you, for example the visit to Styal Mill and getting you to dress up as Victorian children
- how friendly and open you are and that you are prepared to share your feelings and opinions
- that your headteacher knows very well how the school should improve even more.

These are the things that could be better:

- you should be helped to do quite a bit better in mathematics
- if teachers encourage you to talk about your work more and help you to understand more vocabulary to do with different subjects, you will be able to read and write more easily and understand written questions better
- there should be more support for those of you who find your work a bit more difficult than other children.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to really enjoy school, do well with your work and carry on trying really hard.