

Witton Church Walk CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111389
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288945
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Lawrence

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Tolefree
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Church Walk Northwich Cheshire CW9 5QQ
Telephone number	01606 43128
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools and offers full time Nursery provision. The majority of pupils are from the local neighbourhood, which has some pockets of social disadvantage. Most are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school achieved the Dyslexia Friendly School Award in 2006.

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 is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. During the last year, it has been receiving support from the local authority because there was evidence of underperformance following a period of disruption. The relatively new headteacher and changes within the leadership team have contributed to pupils now making satisfactory progress. A large majority of parents are very supportive of the school.

Children enter Nursery with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6 they achieve broadly average standards and this represents satisfactory achievement. Although standards are improving, pupils' achievement, based on their starting points, is not consistent across all year groups. The school has not been rigorous enough in monitoring how well pupils are progressing. This has led to the school missing some under achievement and failing to modify teaching to address the weaker progress. A further consequence of this lack of rigour has been that the school's judgement of its own performance is inaccurate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well because their progress is monitored closely.

Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Year 6 are making good progress and are on target to achieve expected standards, thanks to good teaching in this year group. The support programme from the local authority is having the desired effect in helping to raise standards and address the previous underachievement.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but variable across year groups. This variation contributes to some pupils under-performing. Teachers' planning is organised but it is not always matched sufficiently closely to the learning needs of all pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used as an effective teaching tool and pupils' skills are much improved as a result of the recent investment in technology. The school offers a satisfactory curriculum with some good elements. Recent changes in the curriculum are leading to the development of meaningful links between subjects, although the full impact of this on pupils' achievement has yet to be seen.

The pupils' personal development is satisfactory with some good features. There is a clear focus on healthy lifestyles and this has resulted in pupils having a good awareness of the importance of a diet, hygiene and exercise. Residential visits for Years 2, 4 and 6 provide relevant opportunities for personal development, including how to stay safe. A good range of extra-curricular activities leads to pupils becoming involved in physical activities and contributes to a healthy lifestyle as well as their enjoyment of school. The school provides appropriate care for its pupils including those who are vulnerable and at risk, although pupils expressed concern about the behaviour of a minority in some classes and around the school. Attendance is in line with national averages.

Leadership is satisfactory overall with areas of weakness in the monitoring of pupils' progress and the role of subject leaders. Recent changes by the leadership along with the ongoing support of the local authority indicate the school is in a satisfactory position to improve further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the monitoring of pupils' performance is rigorous in identifying and addressing underperformance.

- Improve the consistency of teaching and raise the proportion of good teaching in order to improve pupils' progress.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater understanding of performance data and its use in helping to raise standards and achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress throughout the Foundation Stage, although not enough is done to capitalise fully on their interests or to extend learning opportunities into the outdoor curriculum. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 have been average over the last two years with standards in mathematics higher than those in writing. Standards in reading, although average, are lower than those in writing or mathematics. After a significant fall following the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 have since risen and in 2006 national tests were broadly average in mathematics and English. The present Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve standards in line with national expectations, largely because of good teaching at the end of Key Stage 2. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and attain standards higher than their counterparts achieve nationally. This is because their performance is closely monitored with well-targeted intervention strategies and good support from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development is satisfactory with some good features. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is satisfactory overall. Spiritual and moral development is fostered by the school's church status. Other religions are celebrated but pupils are not as aware of cultural diversity within society and not enough is done in this area to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society.

Pupils are polite, friendly and keen to take on responsibilities. The active school council ensures that pupils have a voice. Pupils have a clear understanding of how and why it is important to lead healthy lifestyles. They are safety conscious from an early age and have high expectations of good behaviour. Consequently, pupils expressed strong opinions about the minority who misbehave in some classes. They fully recognise the importance of helping others in the school, local community and the world beyond. Attendance is average and punctuality is good. They work well together and independently, and have good ICT skills. This gives them a satisfactory foundation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but varies across the school. In a few lessons the pace and challenge is slow and this leads to a deterioration of some pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress in these lessons as they should.

Conversely, where teaching is good or better, pace and challenge meets pupils' needs and motivates them to achieve well. Pupils are increasingly aware of their targets and work hard towards achieving them. Marking, however, is inconsistent in showing them how to improve their work. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly but some do not use the information on pupils' achievement well enough to devise tasks that are matched to individual pupils' learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with an appropriate emphasis placed on basic skills in mathematics, English and ICT. Pupils are encouraged to make effective links across subjects because of the recent introduction of a thematic approach but it is too early to see the effect on standards. The school has also identified the need for more practical activities in mathematics and science but this is in the developmental stage. As a result of the new building, the Foundation Stage is now well resourced and this addresses a key issue from the previous inspection although not enough use is made of the outdoor provision to develop, reinforce and extend learning opportunities.

Pupils' personal development is promoted satisfactorily through curriculum activities and recently introduced schemes to boost self-esteem. Educational visits and visitors to the school enhance pupils' interests and experiences. An example of this was seen during the inspection when Year 6 pupils were introduced to basic chemistry, spending the day carrying out experiments such as identifying whether household materials were acids or alkalis. This clearly promoted enjoyment and extended their knowledge. There are particularly strong links with the local high school and this has a positive impact on learning and enjoyment by making use of the sporting and scientific facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good aspects. The school was recognised for its work with dyslexic pupils by a national award in 2006. Induction procedures and arrangements for transition to high school are good. Policies on child protection are in place and the school meets the latest government requirements on safeguarding children. Procedures are in place to ensure that those who are at risk or are vulnerable are well supported. First aid and risk assessments are secure. The support for pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory although not enough use is made of performance data and information to ensure that they make good progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress in relation to their individual targets through effective individual education plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have shown recent improvements following changes in the management structure. The new leadership team is beginning to make an impact. It is working well in partnership with the local authority and has a clear focus and plan of action to raise standards and achievement.

Due to the dedication of the headteacher, the school has emerged from a period of disruption. However, the analysis of the information collected on pupils' progress has not been rigorous enough and as a result the school has missed identifying pupils who are not performing as well as they should. This explains why the school's judgement of its own performance is not accurate. Subject leaders are at an early stage of developing their role and are not yet fully effective in their understanding of performance information. Governors are very supportive of the school and report that they are now more influential because they are better informed. This places them in a better position to exercise their responsibility 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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

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?	3

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	4
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us welcome during the inspection of your school. You have a very modern and new school building and it was very nice to spend two days with you. We were impressed by the confident way you spoke to us and by the clear way you told us what you thought of your school. We were impressed by how polite and well mannered you all were but although most of you behaved really well, we did notice that a few of you did not always behave as well as you can.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. We think that everyone looks after you and that the school provides many things for you to do to make your school day enjoyable. Your headteacher is helping you do better in your work and she has made some changes to the way subjects are taught so that lessons will be more interesting. These are some of the other things we judged to be good about your school:

- how well you get on together and the care you show for others
- how well you understand about people who are less fortunate than yourselves and how you can do things to help
- how well you know about healthy lifestyles and staying safe.

We have asked the school to do some things that we think will help make your school even better and you can also help by continuing to work hard and behave well.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to keep a closer check on how well you are doing so that if any of you are not doing as well as you can, they will be able to help you to do your best. We have also asked the teachers to make sure that the work they set in lessons challenges you.

Thank you once again for helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed our two days with you and we hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.