



Upton Heath CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131684
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 293813
Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Upton Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Upton Heath, Upton-by-Chester
Age range of pupils	4–11		Chester, Cheshire CH2 1ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01244 380027
Number on roll (school)	409	Fax number	01244 380027
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Claire Woodcock
		Headteacher	Mrs Claire Lyons
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	8–9 January 2007	293813

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school is in an area of social advantage. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils have White British backgrounds. A smaller than average proportion speak a language other than English as their mother tongue or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, the new headteacher had been in post for 12 weeks.

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 and improving school with good elements to its work. Inspection findings largely reflect the school's own evaluation of its performance except inspectors judge that provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is satisfactory rather than good. Although adults take good care of pupils and provide good support for their personal development, systems to assess, monitor and track pupils' progress are new and have yet to become fully established. Staff do not make best use of tracking and assessment data to identify targets and move pupils' learning on at a fast enough rate. A minority of pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of how to improve their work because teachers' marking is inconsistent. There is satisfactory leadership and management by the new headteacher, senior leaders and governors. This embryonic leadership team recognises that standards must rise further for pupils to achieve their very best. It is too early in the leadership's brief tenure for initiatives to show consistent impact. For this reason, inspectors judge that the school demonstrates satisfactory rather than good capacity to improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Children enter Reception with skills above national expectations. Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage helps children to settle quickly and to achieve satisfactorily. This picture of satisfactory achievement continues throughout Years 1 to 6 and links closely with the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons with increasing detail to meet the needs of all pupils and good lessons are becoming a more frequent feature throughout the school. Senior staff are aware that nothing short of consistently good and better teaching will stimulate pupils to achieve as well as they can. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar rates of progress to other pupils. The school assesses their needs carefully and provides appropriate support. The rich curriculum engages pupils' curiosity so they are attentive and eager learners. Exciting educational visits and well established links with other schools, including one in Soweto, bring richness to learning and new experiences to pupils. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good; their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils become increasingly self-confident and useful members of the school and wider community. Their spiritual development is of the highest order and this reflects the school's core values.

Pupils say that 'this is a friendly school' and look forward to coming. Parents confirm this enthusiasm and ensure that their children attend regularly and arrive on time. Pupils are trustworthy and reliable as they carry out responsibilities around school. All these are important skills to ensure their future well-being. The school fosters good partnerships with parents and welcomes their involvement in all aspects of school life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and pupils' achievements so a greater proportion reaches the higher levels.
- Increase the contribution of senior leaders and middle managers to the monitoring and analysis of pupils' work in order to improve pupils' achievement.

- Ensure that teachers' marking provides pupils with clear next steps in their learning so they know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the school with skills above national expectations. They make satisfactory progress in Reception and most reach or exceed the expected national goals by Year 1. In the 2006 tests, Year 2 pupils gained above average results in reading, writing and mathematics, with particularly strong performances at the higher levels. In 2005, some higher attaining pupils in Year 6 did not do as well as expected in writing and mathematics. The school identified this as an area of concern and introduced strategies to bring about improvement. These ensure that staff successfully track pupils' progress and set challenging targets. As a result, standards and achievement in 2006 strengthened with more pupils reaching higher than expected levels in English, mathematics and science. While achievement is satisfactory overall, performance is now closer to being well above the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable children achieve as well as others because of the carefully targeted support they receive from well qualified teaching assistants. The overall above average standards reached by pupils stand them in good stead for the next stage in their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are quick to point out how much they enjoy school and their good attendance reflects this. They work hard in lessons, produce a good volume of work and work well together. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and this helps to cement excellent relationships with their peers and all the adults in school. They use their time well to develop new skills and become productive members of the community. Parents agree that there is little bullying and that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils are aware of the importance of diet and exercise to healthy lifestyles. Many enjoy fruit snacks and the healthier lunch menu. Pupils are increasingly knowledgeable about what to do in an emergency and recognise potentially hazardous situations. Pupils are trustworthy road safety and recycling officers while school councillors make positive contributions to the school and wider community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular, their spiritual development is excellent. Joyful singing of songs from Soweto, sensitive support for others and respect for the needs of others all reflect values at the heart of the school. Even so, pupils could have a better understanding of what it means to be part of diverse British society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The lack of a consistent and effective system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in all subjects as they move through the school slows pupils' learning. A number of strong features within lessons include exemplary relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and are keen to work hard. Very good classroom management promotes excellent behaviour and galvanises pupils to do their best. Skilful teaching assistants ensure that vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others. They develop more self-confidence and this adds to their enjoyment in lessons and to their future well-being. In the Foundation Stage, lessons are particularly effective in promoting children's reading and writing skills but do not incorporate enough learning outdoors. Links with the local secondary school enable pupils to develop their physical and sporting prowess. These encourage pupils to pursue and understand well how to achieve healthier lifestyles.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum planning for English, mathematics and science has improved and is better adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory but opportunities for children to learn outdoors are limited and this restricts their choices in each area of learning. Strong emphasis on personal, social and health education helps pupils to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles and to grow in confidence. Much of the curriculum is imaginative with many visits and visitors. Year 6 pupils speak with pride about their abseiling and kayaking successes during their stay in Wales. An accomplished artist regularly works with pupils, introducing them to a wide range of techniques and styles. One Year 4 pupil commented, 'I'm improving my art skills and enjoying it too.' The school caters especially well for pupils with musical or sporting talents. The school choir has a very high profile in the community. The many school clubs are popular and parents praise the 'full and varied curriculum', and eagerly anticipate school productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents praise the caring pastoral support their children receive. They say this enables pupils to be 'well motivated, to try hard and to enjoy the successes they achieve'. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health, safety and general well-being. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to turn to with problems. Systems to track pupils' progress are developing, but are at an early stage and relevant targets are not consistently in place in all classes. Through discussion, teachers give pupils guidance in their work during lessons.

Nevertheless, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve further and much of teachers' marking of work lacks this important detail.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has a clear vision of what she wants pupils, staff, governors and parents to achieve, although there has been insufficient time for initiatives to show significant impact. Following success last year in challenging higher attaining pupils to achieve better, the current focus is to raise the attainment and achievement of all groups of pupils. A senior leadership team is now in place and middle managers are beginning to demonstrate leadership in their areas of responsibility. Good partnerships with other schools and outside support agencies help the school with its work and make a particularly strong contribution to developing pupils' sporting skills. All staff take good care of pupils and make a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school. The governing body is supportive and aware of priorities but has yet to establish a challenging role. Parents are very supportive and say, 'we have nothing but praise for this friendly and caring school'. Many are appreciative of the new systems to gather parental views.

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	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	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	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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?	2
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.

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 your friendly welcome during our recent visit to your school. You were all very polite and helpful. We enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. You told us that your school is very friendly and we agree with you. We judge it to be a satisfactory and improving school. There are good things of which you should be proud in your school. You reach above average standards in your work and more of you are now doing even better than this. Your teachers plan interesting activities for you and, because of this, you work very hard in lessons. You say school rules are fair and we were delighted to see how beautifully you all behave. The links with the school in Soweto are very strong and bring valuable new ideas and experiences into your lives. Your joyful singing of the South African songs was really uplifting. We were pleased to see that your parents make sure you come to school regularly and on time so you don't miss important work. This is a very good habit for when you go to secondary school because other people will know you are reliable.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked the adults in your school to help you do even better in your English, mathematics and science work so more of you achieve your very best. We have also asked adults to check how well you are doing and to decide the best ways to help you improve. Finally, we have asked that your teachers give you a clearer idea of how to improve each piece of work when they mark your books. You can help too, by making sure you understand what it is your teachers have suggested in your books. We are sure you can do this because you get on so well with all the adults. We were particularly impressed with the way you always ask for help when you find something difficult to do or understand.

Carry on working hard and enjoying school.