



Puss Bank School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132807
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 294031
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barracks Lane
School category	Community		Macclesfield
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cheshire SK10 1QJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01625 424062
Number on roll (school)	355	Fax number	01625 502026
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lesley Roberts
		Headteacher	Mr C Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	13–14 December 2006	294031

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is high compared to most primary schools. The school has a unit of two classes for up to 12 pupils with autism and a learning centre for older pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Currently there are nine pupils aged 9 to 11 in this centre who join mainstream classes for parts of the curriculum. In addition there is an assessment unit for pupils aged three to seven who have a variety of complex needs. Currently there are 11 pupils on roll in this unit. As a result of a countywide review of resources for pupils with additional difficulties, the assessment unit and learning centre are due to close in August 2007 and pupils are to be taught in schools closer to their homes. The unit for autistic pupils is initially to be expanded to take up to 14 pupils. This will then reduce to seven when further provision is developed in other schools.

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 and has some good features. Key strengths are the care, guidance and support provided for all pupils and the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who, as a result, make good progress. The pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they become very sensible and mature in their attitudes to learning and life in school. Their behaviour is outstanding. These achievements reflect the emphasis that the school's leadership team gives to promoting the welfare of all pupils and giving everyone, whatever their need, an equal opportunity to take a full part in the life of the school.

Comparing the performance of the school with others in the county can be misleading because of the high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. When an analysis is made of the achievement of pupils in mainstream classes, it is clear that they make satisfactory progress overall and more needs to be done if their achievement is to be good. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and the children make satisfactory progress. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 to 6. Standards are broadly average in the current Year 6 but not enough pupils have been reaching the higher Level 5 in national tests in recent years. Standards in mathematics have been falling and were below the national average in 2006. The school has begun to reverse this trend and to promote higher achievement but the full impact of its work is yet to be felt.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There are some inconsistencies across the school. Most lessons have good pace and focus and some have outstanding features but there is not enough challenge for the more able pupils in some and a minority lack pace. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Improvements linking subjects together to make them more meaningful for pupils are beginning to improve its quality. There is a good focus on developing positive attitudes to health and fitness and a good range of out-of-school activities.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with good features. The leadership team has ensured that this is a school that reaches out to pupils, especially the more vulnerable and those at risk. The school's evaluation of its own performance is satisfactory and has led to the school identifying weaknesses in standards in English and mathematics and taking steps to overcome them. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements well and have a good understanding of school issues. The school gives satisfactory value for money overall and is providing good value for money for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school has made good strides in developing provision for information and communication technology (ICT) but still needs to improve the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to improve the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics.

- Improve the pace and challenge of learning in those lessons which are currently satisfactory rather than good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The attainment of the children on entry to the Nursery classes is broadly in line with national expectations. Most children achieve the learning goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year and pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. A provisional analysis of the most recent assessments in 2006 shows that more Year 2 pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing than in previous years. This was the result of an effective focus on teaching the skills of writing in a more structured way. Standards in writing are also showing clear signs of improvement in Years 3 to 6. Not enough pupils in mainstream classes are doing well in mathematics, however, and it is too early to measure the impact of the school's current focus on this subject.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the resourced units make good progress and many reintegrate successfully into mainstream classes before the end of Year 6. They achieve well both in relation to their individual education plans and in the core subjects of English and mathematics. The very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good and has some outstanding features. The behaviour of learners is excellent and pupils show very responsible attitudes towards their work and school life in general. This is evident in lessons and around school. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and show mature attitudes. Older pupils act as playground friends, school councillors, road safety and recycling officers to promote the welfare of all. The pupils enjoy their education and many take a full part in out-of-school activities. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe and are fully aware of the implications of leading a healthy lifestyle. A recent survey by staff of pupils shows that around one third of pupils are now eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day and this is an early sign of improvement resulting from the drive to become a Healthy School. The pupils are confident that bullying issues are dealt with effectively by the school, and the measures that are in place keep the school, as one pupil said, 'bully proof'. Throughout the school, pupils work well cooperatively and independently. These are good skills that will serve them well in high school and the workplace. The overall levels of attendance are satisfactory but are adversely affected by the number of pupils who have complex needs and require additional medical support off site.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Improvements in tracking how well pupils are doing are helping teachers to plan more challenging work. Good features of many lessons include relationships between staff and pupils and behaviour management: these support the learning well. The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and staff have good expertise and experience to provide for these pupils.

Although over half the lessons seen during the inspection were good or better, teaching and learning have not been consistently good and have resulted in only satisfactory achievement overall. This is because information gathered from the monitoring of pupils' performance has not always been used effectively. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is still not good enough and in others there is a lack of challenge for some pupils, particularly the more able. There is inconsistent use of teaching assistants. At times they are used very well, especially when they work with small groups of pupils, but at other times they are under-used, for instance in whole-class sessions.

Pupils are increasingly involved in evaluating and analysing their work to promote their understanding of what they need to do next in their learning. For example, in an outstanding lesson the teacher gathered information from the pupils' own assessment of the work in the lesson to help plan future teaching. Homework diaries help parents to support their children with work at home and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The marking of pupils' work is consistently good, giving positive encouragement to pupils and being well linked to learning objectives.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is improving because subjects are being linked together to promote the skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported throughout the school and particularly in the specialist units. Personal, social and health education has a strong focus on healthy eating and lifestyles and promotes the pupils' awareness effectively. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and good use is made of outdoor areas, though some of the Nursery resources need updating. There is a wide variety of enrichment activities to enhance the curriculum such as residential visits and visitors to school. This is supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Good use is made of the ICT suite and the interactive whiteboards in all classes, which is a further improvement since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff show a high level of commitment to the well-being of the pupils, particularly those who are especially vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is very effective in tracking the personal development of pupils who are at risk. The school provides a safe and supportive environment which parents appreciate hugely. A frequent comment is: 'I can see for myself the care the staff have for each and every pupil.' Procedures for child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety and reducing risk are in place. The school has good links with external agencies to support pupils, and an effective behaviour policy with 'golden rules' ensures that pupils behave extremely well and act very responsibly. Systems to track pupils' progress have improved and now effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school leadership team and middle management are beginning to make significant improvements to the quality of pupils' learning and the curriculum. Examples of this include improvements in pupils' writing, provision for ICT and the quality of the curriculum, which is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. Leadership of the resourced provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and has been maintained since the last inspection. The school's leaders have ensured that this is a school that promotes good relationships among all pupils. School self-evaluation is satisfactory and in recent times has helped the school to address weaknesses in English and mathematics. The views of the school match those of inspectors in relation to achievement and standards, care, guidance and support and the personal development and well-being of pupils. In other respects the school has overestimated its performance. Its capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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	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	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	1
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	2
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	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 very much for your help when we inspected your school. Please pass on our thanks to the other children we met and spoke to while we were with you. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. This means there are some things that the school does well but there are other things the staff need to do to make the school better.

These are some of the things that are good:

- the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- they are especially good at helping those of you who find school work difficult
- your behaviour is outstanding and you are growing into sensible students who take responsibilities seriously and want to learn
- you are getting to know how well you are doing in English and mathematics and are checking your own work to see how you can make it better
- the staff provide you with good opportunities for sports as well as residential visits, activities and clubs after school.

We believe you could be doing better in English and mathematics so we are asking the staff to:

- keep track of how you are doing in these subjects and then set challenging targets for you to achieve by the time you go to secondary school
- make sure lessons are brisk and you learn a lot in them.

As you can see, your part in this is to make sure you work hard in lessons, know your targets and do your very best!