



Garston Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104620
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 294509
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Holman Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside L19 5NS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 4277517
Number on roll (school)	81	Fax number	0151 4942078
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs E Lyons
		Headteacher	Mr R Widdowson
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	8–9 November 2006	294509

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school in South Liverpool. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, but about a tenth are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Five pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Just over one quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. Over 40% of pupils receive free school meals, which is well above average. More pupils than is usual leave or join the school between the Reception and Year 6. The school is designated as a 'Liverpool Healthy School' and as an 'Investor in People'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The inspector agrees with the school's judgement that it is now a satisfactory school with good features. These reside in the personal development and well-being of the pupils, an interesting and developing curriculum and the quality of care and support provided for the pupils. The school ensures pupils enjoy school within a caring environment. Pupils are happy here. They take real pleasure in their work and play and express their views openly and confidently in the knowledge that their contributions are valued by staff and their classmates. The school has been active in seeking their views, for example, through questionnaires. It has enabled them to influence their education by establishing an effective school council. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy sport and 'fun' lessons. The school has refurbished several of its facilities to promote pupils' welfare and learning, and staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils are safe at all times. The school is developing its curriculum with increasing prominence given to information and communication technology (ICT), cross-curricular projects, and a stronger focus on modern languages, which are motivating pupils and enhancing their learning.

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. The latter represents an improvement from the previous inspection. Better tracking of pupils' progress and effective support from the local authority and other partners, for example, in the teaching of mathematics, are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Most children start Reception with skills that are well below expectations, especially in speaking and listening. They make good progress to reach below average standards by the end of the year because they quickly acquire positive learning habits and are fully involved in activities. Progress in Years 1 to 4 is satisfactory. Standards are average at Level 2, but they are not yet matching national figures at the higher levels. Teachers are beginning to use a wider range of strategies but recent developments in teaching and learning are not yet fully impacting in these years. Teaching is still too variable. Good teaching enables the oldest pupils to progress well in their learning. Standards attained at the end of Year 6 were above the national average at Level 4 and matched the national average at Level 5. Overall, however, the sharing of assessment information with the pupils to give them specific targets for improving their learning is not given sufficient prominence.

More effective leadership and management in the past year have piloted the school successfully through a difficult period. Key priorities have been established and implemented more thoroughly. The school has a more accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses in provision. Although the school development plan is comprehensive and appropriately focused, it lacks the sharpness necessary to ensure that the good progress made over the last year will be built on to best advantage. This is partly because governors, while being supportive of the work of the school, have lacked the experience necessary to hold managers effectively to account. Governors now are on 'a steep learning curve' and committed to developing their role as 'critical friends'. Overall, school managers have been vigorous and successful in their pursuit of

improvement since the previous inspection and the school's capacity for further improvement is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good throughout the school.
- Involve pupils more in assessment to push them to higher achievement.
- Extend the systems for monitoring and identify more precisely the actions and impact envisaged in school plans.
- Secure the rigour of governors' monitoring and challenge.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's progress in the Reception class is good because staff use the resources of an attractive setting well and are now monitoring their progress with increasing assurance. By the time pupils join Year 1, standards have risen from being well below average on starting school to below average. Thereafter, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and reach standards that are broadly average. Progress is better in Years 5 and 6. Test results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2005, were below average overall and well below average in writing and mathematics respectively. Few children achieved the higher levels. Results, however, have improved in 2006 and especially so in Year 6. Targets were met in Key Stage 1 at Level 2, but not at Level 3. In Year 6, pupils exceeded national averages at the expected Level 4 and matched them at Level 5. Girls overall did better than boys. This represents good progress for this cohort. The school is aware that further improvements are required at the higher levels in writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 1, and is putting in place a series of strategies to address them. The Year 6 results in 2006 provided encouraging signs of their early impact. Inspection findings and school data indicate that progress is now at least satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is committed to putting its pupils at the heart of all that it does. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the middle two aspects being the strongest. Pupils say school is 'boss' (great). They get on well with each other and feel safe. Staff and pupils are very supportive of each other. Behaviour is good and no pupil has been excluded in the last two years. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and their knowledge of European cultures is growing steadily. The school council has brought about change, for example, in improvements to the playground. Younger pupils enjoy having Year 6 as playground and reading buddies. In lessons, pupils are well motivated and eager to respond. Attendance has improved in the last six months and is now close to national averages. Pupils' awareness of healthy and safe lifestyles is growing, underpinned by a well planned personal, health

and social education (PHSE) curriculum and a good range of popular sporting activities. They have a satisfactory command of the skills that will equip them for their future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A prominent feature in most lessons is the active engagement of pupils in their learning. The planning of lessons has improved and independent or group work is now increasingly matched to the needs of all pupils. In the better lessons, more commonly seen with the youngest and oldest pupils, teachers use a wide range of imaginative resources to deepen pupils' understanding and ensure good progress. In these lessons pupils say, 'there are lots of surprises and learning is always fun'. In the otherwise satisfactory lessons, a brisk pace of learning is not always maintained and opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning are missed. Managers have been energetic in monitoring teaching and learning and have been successful in reducing, if not eliminating, the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning noted at the previous inspection. The usefulness of marking in helping pupils take the next steps in their learning is variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school is now becoming more successful in enabling pupils to use the skills learnt in English and mathematics in other subjects, although the impact of recent developments in this area has yet to be fully evaluated. Teachers and pupils are using ICT with increasing assurance to enhance pupils' self-confidence and learning. Good partnerships, including links with other schools, are providing pupils with increasing opportunities to develop their talents effectively, for example, in sport. The curriculum is further enriched by a number of trips, including a residential visit for Years 5 and 6 and a new trip to France. An appropriate range of visitors extends pupils' knowledge of local community issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care and support for pupils. Staff know pupils well enabling all of them, including the four recent arrivals, to feel settled in school. One parent said of the staff, 'they make every child welcome'. The school looks after pupils' physical well-being by providing free fruit and water fountains. All teachers are qualified first aiders. Child protection arrangements are in place and risk assessment systems are extensive and effective. Pupils have good opportunities to work both cooperatively and independently to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They are clear that

the few instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Induction and transition procedures for pupils are good. While whole-school assessment and tracking systems are improving, opportunities for pupils to be involved in assessment and to be reminded of their targets are less well developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Day to day leadership is effective in ensuring staff and pupils work well in a calm and ordered environment. In the last year, there has been good improvement in establishing systems which give managers more secure information about the quality of provision. This is now starting to be reflected in the achievement of pupils. These improvements result from a willingness of managers and governors to listen to a wide range of expert advice and a determination to put it into practice. Governors are supportive of the work of the school and are committed to developing their ability to hold managers effectively to account.

Managers are working well together to raise expectations and to set a clearer direction for the future. Middle leaders are to receive further training to enable them to be more proactive in developing their subjects. A more robust self-evaluation schedule has been put in place and, although it lacks some sharpness, the progress of pupils is being more closely tracked in the key subject areas identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection. The school has yet to extend and embed these systems across all curricular subjects. Similarly, the evaluation of the impact of the new curricular initiatives is at an early stage. Resources are being used effectively to boost pupils' motivation and enjoyment of school but have yet to impact fully on achievement. For these reasons, leadership and management are satisfactory, rather than good as the school suggests. The school has been proactive in establishing productive links with parents and the local community. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

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	2
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	3
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?	2
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	2
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

I visited your school this week to see how well you were learning. Thank you for making me welcome and for being helpful when I asked you questions. I enjoyed meeting you and finding out how proud you were of your school and your role in improving its facilities.

I think there are a number of good things about your school, but I also found out a few ways in which your learning could be even better. The things I particularly like are:

- children and staff are very friendly and you get on well with each other
- you said you enjoy school because there are lots of interesting things to do
- you are keen to answer in lessons, which helps you learn
- the teachers and yourselves use the interactive whiteboards well to make your learning enjoyable
- the school cares for everyone and makes sure you are safe.

I have asked the headteacher and the staff to:

- ensure that all lessons match the best ones
- challenge you more by making you more active in the setting of targets to guide your learning
- ensure that your progress is tracked more effectively in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I have also asked governors to check how well the school is improving more thoroughly.

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school. Please share this letter with the other children. I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Garston Primary an even better place to be.