

Mosscroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104439
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308601
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Margot D'Arcy

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Ken Keith
Headteacher	Mrs Jillian Albertina
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Bedford Close Huyton Liverpool Merseyside L36 1XH
Telephone number	0151 4778190
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average and is situated in an area of social and economic disadvantage. The number on roll has fallen since the last inspection, mainly due to families moving out of the area. Most pupils are of White British origin and all speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Children begin Nursery with skills that are well below expectations in virtually all areas of learning and are exceptionally low in communication, language and literacy. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2006 and a new deputy headteacher in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mosscroft is a good school. From a low starting point pupils do well both academically and personally. By the time they leave Year 6 they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and have gained valuable life skills that will serve them well in the future. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with national averages and gains in personal standards, such as behaviour, knowledge of different cultures, how to keep healthy and contribute to society, are significant. Levels of attendance are a concern, however, being well below average. Despite these low levels, pupils are adamant that they enjoy school and this is clearly evident in lessons and in their keenness to participate in out-of-school activities. In general, where attendance is poor, it is not something that pupils have significant control over. Holidays in term time are a significant factor along with odd days off because of family issues. The school works exceptionally hard with pupils and their families to promote good attendance. Support from outside agencies is sought and the school has not been afraid to take a hard line on occasions, which has met with some success. Nevertheless, rates remain stubbornly low and limit the benefits the school has to offer those pupils with irregular attendance.

Children's enjoyment of school begins in the Foundation Stage where they make good progress. Here and elsewhere, good teaching and a good curriculum are central to pupils' enjoyment and achievements. When asked to identify a favourite subject, pupils' answers span the whole range, reflecting the significant thought teachers give to planning lessons that appeal to pupils and keep them actively involved. Relationships are strong, caring and supportive, but teachers make it clear to pupils that they expect them to work hard and do their best. Pupils know that teachers and other staff care about them. In discussion, a comment from one that 'all the staff are kind and look after us well' was wholeheartedly agreed, as was the view that 'teachers won't stand any messing around'. The promotion of pupils' academic and personal development goes hand-in-hand. The school's learning mentor plays a major role in helping pupils gain confidence in their ability to be successful in school and aspire to do well afterwards.

Good leadership and management underpin the school's success. The relatively new headteacher and deputy are a dynamic team providing excellent leadership. They have introduced systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work and to track precisely pupils' progress. These have led to a very clear identification of strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement. Currently, however, leadership and management are not distributed sufficiently well throughout the school. Work this year has strengthened the leadership and management of English and mathematics and of the senior leadership team. In other subjects, and for the Foundation Stage, leadership and management roles are not defined or undertaken in any strategic way. The impact is seen more in terms of limiting curriculum innovation and guiding intervention to ensure consistency of practice in some areas, rather than on pupils' standards and achievement. Nevertheless, the current situation weakens strategic management. There is recognition of this weakness, which is a priority for the coming year.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the bright and stimulating environment and see the vast array of exciting activities, a real joy of learning inevitably follows. Children's positive attitudes underpin their enjoyment and good achievements, as does good teaching, curriculum provision and informative

assessment. By the end of Reception, standards in the key areas of personal, social and emotional development, mathematical, creative and physical development are close to the nationally expected standards. Progress in speaking and early reading and writing skills is slower. However, whilst standards in this area are still well below expectations at the end of Reception, most children do well given their low starting points. Improving standards in this area is a priority. Nursery staff are expert at exploiting every opportunity to develop children's language skills, but the emphasis is not as obvious in Reception where opportunities are occasionally missed to promote speaking and literacy skills. Children's personal development and well-being are fostered very well. All staff are caring, promote good standards of hygiene and are vigilant in keeping children safe.

There has been a significant move this year toward integrating the two year groups. However, there are some inconsistencies in practice, despite Nursery and Reception children being housed in the same unit. Reception children follow a different routine for working outdoors and have fewer opportunities to learn in this way. In the Nursery, a healthier emphasis is placed on snack time. Whilst these variations in provision do not have a major impact on children's overall achievement, they detract from a fully integrated provision and stem from there not being anyone with a clear and distinct role for leading and managing the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of attendance so that they are at least in line with national averages.
- Ensure more distributed leadership across the school, including an increased and distinct focus on the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 6. During Years 1 and 2, pupils build effectively on what they have learned in the Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Year 2 fell this year to well below average, but reflected the significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the cohort. The school's data show that despite the fall, many pupils made good progress in relation to their earlier attainment and capabilities. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at this key stage and throughout the school is good. Over the last five years, standards at the end of Year 6 have been broadly in line with national averages. This year, test results have shot up, with improvements across the board at both the expected and higher levels. This represents exceptionally good progress for the year group, particularly in science where results at the higher level look set to exceed national averages. Over time, there has been some variation in the performance of boys and girls, but whilst boys do not generally perform as well as girls in English, there is no consistent pattern of underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

From a low starting point, pupils make significant progress in the development of personal skills. Respect for each other, the adults who work with them and social rules and conventions develops well through the school's very effective provision. Pupils clearly enjoy school and are keen to learn. They know a lot about different people's beliefs and cultures and show respect for and tolerance of these. Pupils say that they like school and have no trouble explaining why they should attend regularly and be punctual. They know the school's strong stance on these

aspects and clearly describe the procedures that occur if their standards fall below the mark. For a significant number of pupils, however, this is a continuing weakness upon which the school's rigorous procedures make limited impact. Pupils develop a good understanding of the skills they need to get on in society and contribute to it. For example, those standing for the school council produce manifestos and canvass support, and Year 5 and 6 pupils take part in the local Mayor's award and children's parliament.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are successful at planning work that captures pupils' interest. Lessons move along at a good pace, with teachers varying the activities so pupils have no time to become bored or distracted. Teachers know pupils well and recognise that they learn best when given opportunities to be actively involved in their work. Typically, this is the case, whether it is talking work through with a partner, playing mathematics games or investigating soil samples to learn about absorption. Occasionally, teachers dominate the lesson by talking too much so pupils' attention dips and learning becomes less effective. Work is generally matched well to pupils' needs. Teachers balance well the need to challenge pupils whilst enabling them to be successful and to see themselves as effective learners. Behaviour is managed extremely well. Teachers praise pupils for their efforts and ensure that any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with discreetly so that they do not interrupt learning. Support staff work well with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, showing much patience and skill to get the best out of them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Whilst the school is only at the planning stage of remodelling its curriculum to make firmer links between subjects, teachers show skill and creativity in making these links in lessons. Consequently, the work planned for pupils is relevant, meaningful and enjoyable and makes a good contribution to their learning and personal development. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are provided for well, with good opportunities for pupils to use and develop these key skills across the curriculum. Provision for physical education is good and adds to pupils' fitness and enjoyment, as do early morning 'wake and shake' sessions. Themed weeks, such as that which focused on cultures from around the world, are popular with pupils, resulting in good learning and the production of very high quality artwork. French from Year 1 to 6 and the increasing range of extra-curricular activities enrich the provision. A range of intervention strategies is used to good effect to support the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care the school provides for pupils is of a very high quality and is evident in all its work. Staff's thorough knowledge of pupils and their families ensure that they are sensitive to any personal or emotional issues that may affect pupils' learning. The learning mentor plays a significant role in supporting vulnerable pupils and their families and in the considerable efforts to improve attendance and punctuality. Procedures here are rigorous but sensitive to pupils,

with latecomers being welcomed with a handshake and congratulated for getting into school. Links with specialist support agencies, such as those for attendance, behaviour and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are strong and enhance provision. Procedures to keep pupils safe are rigorous and meet government requirements. Academic support is developing well, with teachers providing good guidance and advice through marking and helping pupils understand and achieve their targets. New detailed tracking systems provide good information for the school to monitor the achievement of groups and inform the use of intervention programmes to raise standards and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

An exceptionally strong lead for school improvement is provided by the headteacher and deputy whose evaluation of the school's work is good. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, the retirement of some key staff left minimal support for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. The situation was exacerbated because the headteacher was without a deputy for two terms. Weaknesses in the management structure were tackled well, however, and continue to be a priority. The headteacher and deputy are working purposefully to distribute and strengthen leadership and management within the school. Raising pupils' academic and personal standards to increase their aspirations and life chances is high on the agenda and result in challenging targets being set. An initial focus to improve the leadership and management of English and mathematics has been very successful. The management skills of these subject leaders have been enhanced and their inclusion in the senior management team has reinforced the school's capacity for improvement, which is good. Strengthening the role of middle managers is the next step. Whilst this is still at the planning stage, staff are looking forward to the team approach being proposed. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of a high standard. Governors are supportive and becoming more involved in finding out about the school first-hand. They are not afraid to challenge the school about its performance and provision.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I particularly remember your lovely artwork from around the world in the hall and your happy, smiling, faces as you threw yourselves into the early morning 'Wake and Shake'. Your good behaviour, friendliness and knowledge of how to keep healthy were also very impressive.

You will be pleased to know that we judged your school to be good. I know that this will come as no surprise to you because you kept telling us about all the good things that happen at Mosscroft. We were especially pleased to see how well you are learning and that this has led to such good improvements in the standards you attain by the time you leave. Your headteacher, teachers and all the staff work very hard to make lessons fun as well as challenging and to give you lots of interesting experiences that will help you get on at your next school and in later life.

We have asked your school to do two things to make it even better. The first thing is to improve your attendance. Your school is already working very hard at this so we want you to make a real effort to help them by getting into school every day. Maybe your school council could think about how it could help in this too. We have also asked that your school begins to involve more of the teachers in leading and managing aspects of its work.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you all the very best for the future.