

Allanson Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104758
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	308662
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Cox
Headteacher	Mr C Maloney
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Gaskell Street Parr St Helens Merseyside WA9 1PL
Telephone number	01744 678144
Fax number	01744 678145

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Allanson Street Primary School is very large and serves an area of considerable social and economic deprivation. About half the pupils are entitled to free school meals, much more than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. A very small number of the pupils speak English in addition to their home language. The Thompson Sports and Arts Centre, Rising Stars Neighbourhood Nursery and the multi-media suite are part of the schools provision and are open for community use as part of the school's work as a full service Extended school.

The school holds many awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Early Years Kitemark, National Healthy Schools, Activemark and Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that very successfully achieves its aim of providing high quality experiences that enable pupils 'to be happy, successful and keen to learn'. The school is an exciting place right at the heart of local community offering a very wide range of learning and recreational facilities for pupils, parents and families. Visionary leadership constantly seeks ways to improve provision in all aspects of school life. Parents value the school highly, 'The headteacher and staff work tirelessly to offer a wide range of learning experiences and promote an understanding of the world outside the classroom,' is representative of many positive comments received.

Achievement is outstanding. Children's knowledge and skills when they enter the Nursery are well below those typical for their age, particularly communication, language and literacy skills. Children make good progress through the Foundation Stage. Progress speeds up in Key Stage 1 and pupils reach standards that are a little below the national average, but in mathematics, few reach the higher levels. By the age of 11, standards are broadly average which represents excellent progress overall. This is due to very high quality teaching throughout the school and an excellent, innovative curriculum. Staff make learning enjoyable which stimulates and enhances progress; one school councillor praised them saying, 'The teachers teach well and make learning fun'. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress in relation to their starting points because the school provides for their needs extremely well.

A fair system of rules and rewards, and excellent management strategies provide a very secure framework so behaviour is good, and often very good in lessons. Pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of how to be healthy and state they feel very safe in school. The school works hard to ensure every pupil knows how to deal with any problems they encounter. This work is very well supported by the learning mentor.

Great enthusiasm in lessons and keen participation in extra-curricular activities demonstrates pupils' genuine enjoyment of school. The school successfully enables pupils to become useful members of society, with opportunities to be school councillors or 'playground friends' and to work on environmental projects. Pupils make outstanding progress in acquiring basic skills. They work very well both cooperatively and independently, and good problem-solving skills equip them very well for the future. Whilst attendance is satisfactory, holidays taken in term time slows progress for some children.

Excellent care, guidance and support, enhanced by excellent links between home and school, ensure pupils make exceptional progress both academically and personally, and feel valued as individuals. Academic guidance is very strong. Rigorous systems track progress very closely and are used to direct extra help quickly where needed. Meaningful targets for pupils are set that they work hard to achieve, helped by useful pointers provided in teacher's marking.

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels ensure there is a shared focus on improvement. The school is never complacent; leaders are constantly looking for ways to enhance pupils' learning, social development and enjoyment of all the school offers. This is demonstrated in the wide variety of partnerships and links enjoyed by the school, and status as lead Creative School in the local authority. Since the previous inspection there has been very good improvement in all aspects of the school's work, ensuring excellent capacity for further improvement. The school gives excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Achievement in all areas of learning is good because children receive very good teaching and support. Despite this, the majority have not yet reached the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. However, they make exceptionally good progress in their personal and social development so their skills are broadly typical for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Very good induction procedures ensure children settle quickly and happily into school. Relationships are very strong and children are very well cared for in a secure and attractive learning environment. Good use of praise rewards children's successes so they grow rapidly in confidence and independence. Behaviour is good and children show very good attitudes to learning because they enjoy exciting activities that really engage their interest. Planning and assessment procedures are comprehensive with work very well matched to children's individual needs. Leadership and management are outstanding. The experienced teachers and support assistants work very well as a team. Relationships with parents are excellent and parents appreciate the very good support and information they receive in order to help their children's learning at home and at school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 for more able pupils.
- Build on the work with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken during term time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Most pupils make outstanding progress through Years 1 and 2. Assessment data show that standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have improved over time. Few pupils, however, reached the higher level in mathematics at the end of Year 2, in 2007. Focused support has ensured progress for the more able pupils in mathematics is beginning to improve. Most pupils progress very well in their learning through Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Year 6 the number of pupils gaining the expected level in English, mathematics and science is broadly average which represents outstanding achievement from their starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language are catered for excellently so they progress at the same very good rate as their peers and join in all activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very helpful and considerate to each other and to visitors and respect other cultures and ways of life. They enjoy growing their own vegetables using the school allotment and are very keen to participate in the many sporting activities offered both during the school day and after school. This is reflected in the many national awards the school has received. Pupils know how to keep safe through road safety and stranger awareness classes, and have a very good understanding of internet safety. They report that bullying is not a problem and are confident that they know an adult to turn to if a problem should arise. They readily take on responsibilities. The active school council has been involved in improving the school environment by working with the Groundwork Trust to develop the school grounds. Pupils show a very good awareness of the needs of others.

Raising funds to support the Angel Starfish crŠche for Aids victims in South Africa also gives them an awareness of cultural and global issues. Attendance is average and has improved due to measures put in place by the school and the work by the learning mentor. However, some families still take children on holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Staff provide first-rate opportunities for pupils to become self-motivated, independent learners. Lessons move along at a good pace and teachers use imaginative approaches to present tasks as challenges so pupils are kept on their toes and fully engaged in learning. They cooperate very well with their 'talking partner', happily discussing their challenges and helping each other. All resources are used to meet pupils' individual learning styles and needs most effectively. This is particularly valuable for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language, who are very well supported by the capable teaching assistants. Well directed and very skilled support for lower achieving pupils results in their excellent progress. An innovative system of 'co-coaching' ensures the best practice in school is shared and the quality of teaching is constantly improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers an exciting curriculum that really stimulates pupil's involvement in learning, thus contributing strongly to their outstanding achievement. Whilst the curriculum is very creative, basic key skills are clearly identified in all activities. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, suitably adapted so the majority of pupils make very good progress. Pupils often extend their learning in the multimedia suite, for example, researching the internet for information on the Tudors for electronic presentations. The excellent programme of personal development successfully incorporates all strands of the Every Child Matters agenda, resulting in confident, caring pupils who make useful contributions to the community. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding, particularly in the arts and sports, and carefully planned visits extend learning in many subjects. The 'Children's University' provides very well for pupils with particular gifts or talents. Pupils praised the variety of clubs, held at lunchtime and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a very caring school. Teachers are highly skilled at building their pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pastoral support is excellent. Strong staff teamwork ensures that the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met very well and these pupils make very good progress. Extensive partnerships and links with external agencies ensure pupils and their families receive excellent support. Parents value the school highly and are particularly appreciative of the support through the Family Learning and SHARE programmes. They are very well informed through weekly newsletters and the attractive and informative school website. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are extremely thorough and comprehensive. Information gained is used very well to set targets which are regularly reviewed by the class teachers and senior managers. As a consequence, pupils make brisk progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly with very helpful comments so

pupils know what they need to do to improve. Procedures to promote child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety, and to reduce risk meet all current requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are central to the school's sustained success. Strong, motivating leadership from the headteacher has successfully created and maintained a climate where everyone is constantly striving to improve the pupils' academic and social development. All staff share this vision. The school evaluates its' performance rigorously, if modestly, and accurately identifies areas for improvement. The senior leadership team is well informed and eager to pursue further development of the whole school. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the needs of each pupil and the systems in place to track pupils' progress are very effective. This results in consistent and appropriate challenge for the pupils in their work, although the school recognises the need to ensure younger more able pupils receive extra challenge to reach the higher levels in mathematics. High-quality professional development ensures staff are encouraged to use their expertise confidently not only to benefit the pupils but also for themselves. Governance is excellent. Governors are well informed and strongly supportive but, they are equally confident to hold the leadership rigorously to account.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

We would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school. The inspectors all enjoyed talking to you and were very pleased to hear how much you enjoy school. It was good to see you all working really hard to meet your targets, even though you were really excited about the pantomimes and performing the Nativity play for your parents. You said you feel safe and think you have good teachers who make your work fun and we agree with you. Your parents told us that they are very happy with the school too.

We thought you would like to know what we found out.

- Allanson Street is an outstanding school with outstanding leaders.
- Excellent teaching helps you make excellent progress with your work so by the end of Year 6 you reach standards similar to other children of your age.
- You behave really well, know how to be healthy and stay safe and are very reliable monitors and school councillors.
- Your school cares for you really well and you are very caring towards others in school and in the wider world.
- The curriculum is very exciting and gives you lots of experiences and different ways to learn.

Here are a couple of things that we would like the school to do.

- Help more children reach higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Make sure fewer families go on holidays in term time.

We know you will want to help the school do this so please continue to work really hard and make sure you come to school every day.