

Newton-le-Willows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104775
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308665
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

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	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Rahaman
Headteacher	Mr Garry Senior
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Sanderling Road Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9UF
Telephone number	01744 678390
Fax number	01744 678391

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Inspection number	308665

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; pupils' personal development and well-being; and the quality of academic guidance. Evidence was gathered from brief observations of lessons; discussions with senior managers, governors and pupils; and scrutiny of pupils' work, school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the HMI found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified.

Description of the school

Newton-le-Willows Primary is almost twice as large as the average primary school. There is a larger proportion of boys than the national average and a larger proportion of pupils eligible to receive a free school meal. Most pupils are White British. A relatively high proportion, one in three pupils, has learning difficulties and/or disabilities but there are very few with a statement of special educational needs. A large proportion of pupils join the school after the Reception year. Six pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school has close links with Edge Hill as a Partnership Plus School, and takes a significant role in training student teachers. For the last six years, the school has had Investors in People status. It also has a number of other awards including National Healthy School status; the Bronze Eco-Squad Award; and Activemark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Newton-le-Willows Primary is an outstanding school. Parents and children are overwhelmingly supportive of what it does. A typical parental comment was that 'the school has a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and this is promoted by both staff and pupils' and that it is 'a very well run school, (with) excellent teaching and support staff who give all the children a well rounded basis of skills to continue their lives'. Parents of pupils who have joined from other schools are particularly glowing in their praise.

This is an inclusive school which lies at the centre of the community. It has excellent links with partner agencies. These links are well forged and effective in developing pupils' well-being, their life chances and academic success. The school, for example, plays a leading part in training student teachers from Edge Hill College. This partnership with Edge Hill is highly effective and the students play an important role in supporting and teaching pupils. They also help to hone and further develop experienced teachers' existing teaching skills.

Pupils make outstanding progress because staff teach an innovative, skills-based curriculum and pupils are exceptionally well guided, supported and cared for. Pupils enter school with skills and knowledge that are well below those typical for three and four year olds. They get a flying start in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and by the time they leave Year 2 they attain standards that are in line with the national average. In the most recent national assessments in 2007, most pupils attained the expected Level 2 in reading and mathematics but fewer attained the higher Level 3. In writing, standards rose significantly and were above the national average. Pupils make outstanding progress in Key Stage 2, particularly boys, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils looked after by the local authority. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils attain standards that overall are above the national average, particularly in mathematics and science. In English, although standards are average, a smaller proportion attains the higher Level 5 than nationally.

Pupils reach these standards because teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and structured. Resources such as interactive and personal whiteboards are used skilfully to engage pupils. Pupils commented that lessons are fun; this is because pupils are actively involved in purposeful and interesting activities. Questioning is used well to assess pupils and to extend their knowledge and their thinking. Assessment is effectively used to identify as early as possible where individual pupils are not making progress as fast as they could. Able teaching assistants are strategically deployed to target skills and knowledge that groups and individuals need to learn. Pupils know their academic as well as their personal targets. A minority of targets are imprecise which means that pupils do not always know what they have to do to reach them. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently against clear learning objectives. In the best cases, next steps are identified which enable pupils to know exactly what they need to do in the next lesson to improve further.

Pastoral care for pupils is excellent. Health and safety, safeguarding and child protection procedures are all rigorously applied. Staff nurture and show care and concern for pupils. One parent summed up the views of many: 'This attitude towards school is created by the staff, both teachers and support staff, by the way in which they respond to the individual needs of each and every child, be it emotional, spiritual, health, behavioural or educational. All aspects of each child matters to the staff.'

The innovative skills-based curriculum is a recent school development. It is under constant review and is outstanding. It focuses on personal, social and emotional development and teaching subjects that meets the needs and interests of pupils. Staff and pupils speak with enthusiasm about personalised learning time, and this innovation is another reason why the curriculum is exciting and relevant. Pupils express their preferences about what they want to learn. Teachers then plan activities that are based on six key skills: communication, mathematics, information and communication technology, problem solving, working with others and improving own learning and performance. Pupils develop increasingly more advanced skills in topics that link subject areas together. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of theme days and weeks, visits, extra-curricular activities and opportunities to link with other schools and professionals.

As a result of the excellent curriculum and care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils relate well to each other and behave very well in school. They are keen to share their views and opinions and do so respectfully. Their social and moral development is excellent and their spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and of how to stay safe. They are able to describe, for example, the dangers of accessing the Internet. Pupils raise funds extensively for good causes and charities and take a very active role in running and contributing to the school through the eco-squad, and the class and school councils. For example, councillors read and approve written applications from pupils to be playground buddies. Although attendance is rising and the school has exceeded the local authority's targets for some years, this remains in line with the national average.

The headteacher provides outstanding strategic leadership and is very ably supported by a skilled, enthusiastic team of senior managers. Leaders at all levels, including governors, accurately evaluate the work of the school. The school improvement plan is linked intrinsically to staff training and to performance management. A constant drive to improve provision, standards and pupils' life chances is at the heart of the school. There is a track record of accurately identifying areas for improvement and coming up with innovative and creative ideas to move the school forward: this makes the school's capacity to make further improvements outstanding. The school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. It is a bright, vibrant learning environment which is secure and welcoming. Expectations are high and the emphasis on personal development ensures that the children quickly learn to play, work together and develop confidence and self-esteem. From a low starting point, children make very good progress, particularly in mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Despite such good progress, they leave for Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for children of this age. Their writing skills and creative development are particularly low. There is a very good balance between activities that pupils choose themselves and tasks that are more closely directed by adults. Very able teaching assistants are well deployed to teach specific skills and knowledge that children of this age need. Teachers make skilful use of assessment to devise activities, a curriculum and a learning environment to tackle areas of underachievement. Children have an input into the curriculum. To stimulate boys' interest in writing, for example, teachers asked children what they wanted to learn about. The resulting topic on pirates stimulated some excellent writing and creative work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher national curriculum levels.
- Further increase pupil attendance.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	2
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	1
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	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?	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Newton-le-Willows Primary School, Merseyside, WA12 9UF

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. I enjoyed talking to you, looking around your school and observing parts of your lessons. It was enjoyable meeting with the school council who are good ambassadors for your school.

You are right to be proud of Newton-le-Willows Primary because it is an outstanding school. Mr Senior and all the adults ensure that you make excellent progress in your academic subjects but also in your personal development. You and the teachers were particularly enthusiastic about your personalised learning time and I agree that this is an exciting and innovative way of teaching the curriculum. Your teachers work hard to plan good lessons that are interesting and ensure you learn what you need to know. I could see that you enjoy lessons and that you knew your personal and academic targets.

Your school has very good plans to continue improving and I have asked Mr Senior to increase the proportion of you that meet the higher levels, and to further increase your levels of attendance. You can help by always trying your best and by taking on advice that teachers give you when they mark/assess your work. You can also help by making sure you only take time off school when you are too ill to attend.

I wish you all well for the future.