

Legh Vale Primary School, Early Years and Childcare Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104782
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	308669
Inspection date	19 September 2007
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	619
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dennis Marsh
Headteacher	Mr Michael Hewlett
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Legh Road Haydock St Helens Merseyside WA11 0ER
Telephone number	01744 678330
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large primary school serves a residential area. In September 2006, the school took responsibility for pupils of a nearby school that closed. The junior building of that school is about 800 metres from the school site and has continued to accommodate the remaining Key Stage 2 pupils who are now part of Legh Vale's roll, because the main school building is full to capacity.

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools Award and the ActiveMark (Gold).

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of pupils, the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and the quality of the curriculum. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, discussions with members of the core management team as well as pupils and other staff, and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report. The Early Years and Childcare Centre that shares the school's premises was not part of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Outstanding leadership and management lead to the positive outcomes in pupils' excellent achievement and exemplary personal development. This is a school in which staff, very ably led and encouraged by the leadership team, are always looking to make positive changes that enhance pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' progress is impressive. From entering the Nursery with skills which are below average, pupils reach above average standards in Year 6. In some years standards are well above average. This is achieved through excellent teaching, rigorous monitoring of how well pupils are doing and highly effective pastoral care. The high profile given to easing the transfer of pupils from one key stage to the next is a prime example. Links with parents are another key focus, so that the partnership brings out the best in pupils. Those pupils who are experiencing stress or who have learning difficulties make excellent progress because they receive all the support they need. A clear indication of the effectiveness of the school is the continued rise in standards at Year 6 at a time when pupils from the closing school were being assimilated and provided for.

Pupils enjoy school very much and behave exceptionally well. They develop an excellent awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit lifestyle. The manners and politeness of pupils are exemplary. Pupils speak enthusiastically about lessons and clearly take a full part in helping to make the school an enjoyable and safe place to be, for instance, through their roles as peer counsellors, school councillors, buddies and monitors. They develop the essential skills of cooperative behaviour and independence in learning which help them when they begin secondary education. An example of how the pupils learn about good citizenship is the Dawn Patrol, whereby pupils on their way to school look out for a card displayed in the window of homes of elderly people. If the card is missing, the sign to indicate that something may be wrong, the pupil reports it on arrival at school and staff follow it up with action through an outside agency.

The care, guidance and support of all pupils are excellent. Staff and pupils have outstanding relationships and these are the foundation for the pupils' mature, positive attitudes. The school has developed excellent procedures to keep track of pupils' achievement. Staff use the information very well to identify gaps in learning so that they can match challenging work to pupils' particular needs. The school has established a 'chill-out' area to provide pupils with opportunities for quiet and individual support, and an inter-agency approach to family support, with meetings hosted in school that bring together local services to help the more vulnerable. This means that parents view the school as a place where help and advice are at hand. The school is rightly proud of its history of links with parents. These links promote the education of their children and offer new openings for parents; for example, through workshops, courses, drop-in facilities and opportunities to gain qualifications.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is outstanding. Strengths of the teaching in all classes include high expectations for what pupils can achieve and a wide range of teaching styles that promote pupils' independence and skills at problem solving. The pupils learn exceptionally well because staff encourage the culture of 'You can do this'. The curriculum has a richness that promotes pupils' enjoyment of school exceptionally well. Links between subjects are very well established and there are exciting themed weeks in which topics are explored through visitors to school and a wide range of events, trips and activities outside lessons. The quality of the presentation of pupils' work displayed in classrooms is impressive. It makes a

lively learning environment and promotes pupils' self-esteem exceptionally well. The school operates an extensive programme of activities that extend the length of the school day and are highly valued by parents and pupils, who jump at the chance to take part.

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, encouraging and enabling those around him to improve their own expertise and be adventurous in all that they do. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and based on thorough monitoring, though the school has been too cautious in some of the views expressed. The school takes a lead part in a network with other schools and a key feature of the leadership that exists at all levels is the way the school embraces initiatives and ideas. Examples include a project to build bridges between faith communities, which links the school with another whose roll is largely Muslim, and a project that focuses on communication and drama and has led to the creation of a small, well equipped drama studio. These initiatives are helping to raise standards in speaking, listening and writing as well as increase pupils' awareness of other cultures. Governors are highly supportive, have a very good understanding of the school's performance and challenge the school very well. Very effective steps have been taken since the last inspection to improve provision and standards, for instance, in pupils' writing, and this indicates the school's excellent capacity to maintain its quality and performance. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is well below average and, because of the excellent outcomes, the school provides outstanding value for money. It is difficult to summarise here the highly positive support parents have for the school but perhaps this says it all: 'I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the school to anyone!'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is exceptionally well managed and provides a model for other settings. As a result, the Nursery and Reception classes cater for the needs of the children extremely well. The Nursery is very popular and meets the needs of parents by offering flexible part-time arrangements. The children are exceptionally well cared for and staff expectations for children's progress are high, especially in relation to their personal, social and emotional development through the links that the staff forge with individual children, in their role as key workers. Children engage very well with their learning, and make good progress so that by the end of the Reception year standards are broadly in line with national expectations in all areas of learning. Staff plan the activities together very well to give children an exceedingly broad and exciting curriculum. The transition into Nursery, between classes and on to Year 1 is of high quality and ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of all groups of children. The school development plan addresses the needs of the Foundation Stage very well.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant aspects for improvement.

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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	2
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	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Legh Vale Primary School, Early Years and Childcare Centre, Haydock, WA11 0ER

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now I would like to share with you what we found out about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. Here are just some of the excellent features.

- The staff take excellent care of you all and teach you exceptionally well.
- Your headteacher has high expectations for your school and everyone in it responds to the challenge.
- It is clear that you enjoy school very much and are all becoming mature students who want to do well.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a flying start in school.
- You are making excellent progress in your school subjects.
- The school makes your learning very exciting and interesting, for instance in planning the themed weeks, links with other schools, visits and visitors to school.
- The staff provide you with excellent opportunities to take on responsibilities in school and to enjoy activities at playtimes, lunchtimes and after school.

Congratulations to everyone! Please carry on working hard and enjoying school.