

The District CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104792
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308672
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Baker
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Clewes
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2004
School address	Patterson Street Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9PZ
Telephone number	01744 678250
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school. It serves an area which has above average social and economic disadvantage. Almost a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils having learning, social or emotional needs are above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and a small proportion is from other minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy/Roma or Travellers of Irish heritage. The school has suffered some significant disruption to staffing in recent years, including at leadership level. It has received a number of awards, including Eco School (Bronze), Foundation Stage Quality Mark, Activemark and Healthy Schools Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school which provides sound value for money. The school has notable strengths; for example, pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are good. However, staffing disruptions brought about by prolonged staff absences and some weak teaching have slowed the rate at which some pupils learn.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They begin Year 1 with skills that are broadly expected for their age. Standards in Year 2 in 2007 in reading, writing and mathematics declined to below average. Management acted swiftly and systems were introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence shows that this has been effective and progress in Year 2 is currently satisfactory. During the same period of time, staff absences and some weak teaching in Years 3 and 4 slowed pupils' progress. Consequently, at the end of Year 6 in 2007 standards were broadly average in English and mathematics and not as high as they could have been.

Standards in the current Year 6 present a similar picture.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The best teaching matches activities well to pupils' differing levels of understanding, but this does not occur in all classes. The curriculum is satisfactory and has a number of strengths, including good information and communication technology (ICT) provision and the support of high quality specialist teachers, for example to deliver music lessons. However, there are not enough lunchtime and after-school clubs to help pupils develop their talents and interests.

Pupils enjoy school and say that there is little or no bullying. They know that exercise, nourishing foods and rejecting harmful substances will help them to live healthy lifestyles. They say they feel safe and know what to do if there is a problem. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by taking responsibility in school such as members of the school or Eco councils very seriously. They contribute effectively to the school and wider community through raising money for a range of charities. The skills pupils gain in literacy, numeracy and ICT give them satisfactory preparation for their future. The school works well in partnership with the local community and the local authority to support pupils' and their families' learning, social and emotional needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some noteworthy strengths. The acting headteacher and senior leadership team have worked with determination, commitment and a clear vision which have successfully steered the school through a very unsettled period. The good work that this team has accomplished is seen in pupils' improved standard of behaviour, higher levels of attendance and in the increased rate of progress made by pupils in most classes. More rigorous monitoring, tracking and self-evaluation systems have been put in place. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its effectiveness which has already led to improvement demonstrating its good capacity to improve further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and well informed, effectively challenging school leaders on financial management and staff deployment.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. Parents agree and a typical comment is, 'There is a warm and welcoming environment with lots of interesting things for children to do and learn.' Children start from a variety of pre- school settings but good induction

procedures including home visits ensure that they settle quickly. Children begin with levels of learning which are below expectations for their age particularly in their social, communication and mathematical skills. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage so that by the time they enter Year 1 most have reached national expectations for their age in all areas of learning. Teaching and learning are good overall. Outdoor areas are used well so that learning takes place both inside and outside. Planned improvements to outside areas in Reception will improve provision still further. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed effectively. Planning is successfully matched to children's needs because it is based on thorough observations of the children. They benefit from having a designated key worker which helps them make good progress in their personal development. Children with learning, social and emotional needs make good progress because of the specialist adult help available.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in English and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 to ensure that they make enough progress based on their attainment at the beginning of Year 1.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' learning is consistently good in all classes.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to take part in after-school and lunchtime activities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In most years since the last inspection, pupils began Year 1 with skills that were broadly in line with national expectations. Over the same period, standards at the end of Year 2 declined to below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of some weak teaching and prolonged staff absences which slowed progress. The school identified these weaknesses and put in place measures to improve standards. For example, it introduced 'mighty writing' to improve the quality of pupils' written work and 'time bombs' to improve pupils' mental calculation skills. These measures are beginning to pay off and standards in the current Year 1 and 2 are beginning to rise. In Years 3 and 4, progress has also been adversely affected by staffing disruptions and some weak teaching, leaving pupils with too much lost ground to make up in Years 5 and 6. Although progress accelerates in these year groups, standards in English and mathematics remain broadly average. Given pupils' starting point to Year 1, standards should be higher. Pupils experiencing learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties make similar progress to their classmates because of the effective support they receive in meeting their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They look after and relate well to each other and understand the difference between right and wrong. This is reflected in their good behaviour. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. 'Lessons are fun and we learn in interesting ways' is a view typical of pupils. They know how to keep healthy and safe. Bullying incidents are rare and pupils understand what to do if they are in trouble or have a problem. Older pupils promote good citizenship by supporting younger pupils in the 'STAR' scheme, leading social activities at playtime and

reinforcing good behaviour both in and out of the school building. The poor attendance of a small group of pupils adversely affects attendance overall and, as a result, it is below the national average. However, improvements have been made with good support from the school administrative officer and outside agencies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In some lessons, teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. In those lessons, pupils are learning from the moment they enter the classroom. This was seen in a Year 6 science lesson which developed pupils' investigative and independence skills in a lively and imaginative way. Such lessons build in healthy competition; for example, pupils work against the clock in mental mathematics 'time bomb' activities or in 'brain stretch' to challenge the more able. Consistently good relationships in such lessons result in pupils having the confidence to contribute and to take risks. In the less effective lessons, tasks and activities set for pupils are insufficiently stimulating and do not fully engage them in their learning. This means they do not make as much progress as they could and their behaviour is sometimes not as good as that normally seen in the school. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have learning, social or emotional needs enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The contribution that the curriculum makes to pupils' learning is satisfactory. The quality of provision for physical education since the last inspection has improved and is now good. A strength of the curriculum is in helping pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. There are many opportunities for enrichment through visits and visitors to the school which enhance pupils' enjoyment and their willingness to learn. Although there is a wide range of activities offered to pupils in art, sport and music during the school day, there are limited opportunities for pupils to extend learning outside lessons at lunchtime or after school. Effective links with the local authority and community partners help the school to provide additional activities which increasingly give pupils better learning opportunities. A successful breakfast club and after-school club are well attended and enjoyed by pupils. These activities contribute well to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents agree that this is a strength of the school. Staff know the pupils and their families very well, and this helps them to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. Parents typically comment that staff are approachable and listen to any concerns they may have. Procedures for safeguarding pupils from harm are in place. Support for pupils who find learning difficult or who have social, emotional or communication needs is very effective. Staff who work closely with these pupils, for example in the 'Sunshine Group', do a good job in helping them to make progress similar to that of other pupils. Academic guidance given to pupils is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of what their targets are and what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

With the support of the school's senior leadership team, the acting headteacher has rapidly gained a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She demonstrates a high level of expertise and very good commitment to helping the school to improve. The structure for providing leadership and management at different levels is in place and this is beginning to bear fruit in raising pupils' achievement. However, due to the relatively short time that systems for securely tracking and monitoring pupils' progress have been in place, the full impact of these on raising standards in English and mathematics is not yet apparent. Governors have a realistic picture of the strengths of the school and the improvements it needs to make.

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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?	3
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?	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 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	3
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	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?	3
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?	3
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	3
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	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

Inspection of The District C of E Primary School, Newton-le-Willows,
WA12 9PZ

Thank you for your friendly welcome during our recent visit to your school. You were all very polite and helpful. We enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. You told us that your school is very friendly and we agree with you. We judge it to be a satisfactory and improving school. There are good things of which you should be proud in your school. You say school rules are fair and we were delighted to see how well most of you behave. You told us how you feel safe and well cared for and we saw how well you get along together in class and on the playground.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We think that you could do better in English and mathematics. We want you all to be challenged to do your best in every class. We would like you to have more opportunities to take part in lunchtime and after-school clubs, which will help you develop your talents and interests more. Your teachers know about this and will be working very hard to make things even better for you. You can help by listening very carefully to your teachers' instructions and always doing the very best you can in lessons.