

St George's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104995
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308731
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael McIlroy 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	806
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Frank Brennan
Headteacher	Mr S Smurthwaite
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	St George's Road Wallasey Merseyside CH45 3NF
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St George's is one of the largest primary schools in England and is based on two sites. It serves a community of average prosperity. The vast majority of its pupils are of White British heritage and few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are few pupils with a statement of educational need.

The school holds the Basic Skills Award and the Sports Achievement Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The school's chief strengths lie in the exceptional care and support it provides for pupils.

Pupils make good progress in their learning. Most pupils enter the school with levels of knowledge and abilities that are expected for their age and get off to a good start in the well organised and very well led Foundation Stage. This good progress is maintained throughout pupils' time in school and by the time they leave they have attained standards that are above average. Standards in English are particularly high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress due to the very good support they receive in school and from external agencies.

The school is effectively and determinedly led by the headteacher, who is well supported by the senior leadership team. Together, they have created an inclusive and purposeful ethos in which learning can thrive. A visitor to the school is struck by its peaceful yet businesslike working atmosphere. One factor in the school's success is the good relationships between staff and pupils. Another is the successful way in which initiatives, such as that to raise standards in mathematics, are thoughtfully linked to other improvement measures and implemented throughout all year groups in this large school. The leadership team is supported by a number of curriculum teams which monitor some aspects of pupils' learning. There is scope to develop the skills of the subject leaders in these teams in order to deepen their, and the school's, understanding of their areas and to help them raise standards further.

A good curriculum contributes to pupils' good overall progress. It is appropriately focused on the core subjects, and has recently been adapted to make lessons more relevant and interesting for pupils. It is strongly enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are very popular with pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is characterised by the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils' good personal development and well-being also contribute to their learning. They are polite and behave well in and around school and make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and secure. Attendance is satisfactory, partly due to parental holidays taken in term time.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are outstandingly cared for by the school. They also receive very good support in their learning, partly because of the effective partnership which exists between the school and other agencies and partly because of recent improvements in provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Both these aspects strongly contribute to pupils' well-being and their good progress in learning. Pastoral guidance is good but there is scope to improve the academic guidance that pupils receive. This is particularly so in marking, where pupils would benefit from knowing more fully the next steps necessary to improve their work.

Governance is good. The majority of parents who returned questionnaires are very supportive of the school's work and many commented favourably on the ease with which staff could be approached. A few would like communication between school and parents to be improved. Given the good progress made by pupils, the above average standards they attain and its outstanding care and support, the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. This key stage is very well led and managed and pupils get a good start to their education. Most enter the school with the levels of skills and knowledge that are expected of their age. Pupils make good progress so that by the end of their time in this key stage many have met and exceeded the early learning goals expected of them. Induction to the Nursery and the Reception classes is carefully planned. Staff visit children at home, thus developing good partnerships with parents from the outset. Information evenings for parents are supported by attractive, informative induction packs. Staff host useful workshops for parents, for example on phonics, and the weekly sending home of mathematical packs encourages parental involvement in their children's education.

Pupils are happy in school. They feel safe and secure because of well established routines. Teaching is consistently good and pupils are well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. Uniform planning is very detailed and identifies assessment opportunities. Records of pupils' achievements are meticulously kept and are based on observations of learners' work. Staff know exactly where individual children are in their learning journey and how to move them on to the next stage. All key areas of learning are very well resourced in the well organised teaching space. There is a good blend of teacher-led and child-initiated activities and pupils are able to sustain their own learning independently for long periods. Learning is organised on exciting themes. For example, pupils in the Nursery were enthralled by their work on 'mini-beasts' and those in the Reception classes were totally engrossed by a topic on pirates. Staff model the good use of language and extend children's language and thinking skills through careful questioning. Positive behaviour and good personal development is promoted effectively through 'Georgie Bear's Rules' which are displayed and referred to in all classrooms. Procedures for the smooth transfer of pupils into Year 1 classes are very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop subject leadership so that subject leaders have a greater oversight of their areas in the school and greater impact on raising standards.
- Ensure consistency in marking so that all pupils know the next steps they must take in their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good progress made by pupils in the Foundation Stage is sustained in Key Stage 1. Standards are high and have been consistently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics for the last five years. Provisional results for the most recent assessments provided by the school suggest that this trend has been maintained.

In Key Stage 2, standards in English were well above average for the last two years and those in science have been consistently above average for the last five years. Results in mathematics, however, dipped in 2007 and the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was just below average in this subject. Inspection evidence and assessment data provided by the school, however, suggests that attainment in this subject will rise this year. Historical data suggested that the overall progress made by pupils in this key stage last year was below that expected for them. However, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and assessment information provided by the school confirm that pupils, including the more able, make good progress in

the core subjects. This is due to improvements in teaching and the school's strong focus on raising standards in mathematics. Pupils also have good opportunities to develop their skills well in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress. These groups benefit from good support in classrooms and in small withdrawal groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They show considerable maturity and a deep care and respect for each other and adults. Relationships at all levels are a strength of this well ordered community. Understandably, against this background, pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. They feel totally safe in school and know who to turn to if they need help. They are confident that they will be listened to and that action will be taken should the need arise. Most pupils consistently show positive attitudes towards their work and play well together. Their pride in their school and their positive behaviour play a part in attaining above average standards. Pupils are generally articulate and confident. They have a particularly good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and a strong desire to help the immediate and wider community. This is particularly true of the well-established School Council which helped plan, and raised funds for, various resources. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many opportunities on offer to promote spiritual and cultural awareness and these are received both sensitively and with enthusiasm. Attendance is average. The school actively seeks to improve this, and no longer authorises holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and contribute to pupils' good personal development and progress. Teachers know their pupils well and positive relationships are a key feature in classrooms. An emphasis on positive discipline encourages pupils to behave well and develop good attitudes to learning. Planning is thorough, detailed and consistently applied throughout the school. Interactive displays on classroom walls promote learning by making pupils aware of what they are learning and why. Interactive whiteboards are used to great effect and help to motivate and engage pupils. Classrooms are very well organised and resources, including teaching assistants, are well deployed to support all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils work well together when asked to do so and teamwork is encouraged through the use of talk partners, peer coaching and peer assessment. This encourages pupils to become actively involved in shaping their own learning and helps deepen their understanding. The practical nature of lessons, with plenty of opportunities for learning through first-hand experiences, contributes to the air of excitement that pervades classrooms in the best lessons. In less effective lessons, although work is matched to pupils' different abilities, some of the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It is broad, varied and balanced and is focused appropriately on raising standards in the core subjects. It provides pupils with a wide

range of activities which interest and stimulate them, such as learning Spanish. The school has recently adopted a new thematic approach to how the curriculum is taught. This has enabled beneficial links to be made between subjects, such as mathematics and physical education. It has also provided pupils with more meaningful experiences in subjects such as geography. The curriculum is enriched through theme days such as the 'fun day' held on mathematics. Consequently, lessons are enjoyable and pupils are keen to learn. Good provision exists for ICT. There is a very wide programme of extra-curricular activities such as yoga, cheerleading and girls' football. Pupils can also enjoy gardening in the attractive Centenary Garden, which also houses an outdoor classroom area with a 'living wall' which enables pupils to study plants and wildlife. Indeed, one pupil said that the range of clubs was 'the best thing about the school'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good overall with outstanding features. The care that pupils receive is outstanding. Staff are highly committed to the well-being of pupils. For instance, individual care plans are detailed and carefully tailored to meet the specific health needs of pupils who require them. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place and regularly reviewed. Supervision in and around school is good and pupils feel safe, secure and confident in school. Support for pupils is also excellent. A representative view from pupils was, 'Teachers always help you if you get stuck with your work, they make me feel good and the rewards make me want to do better.' The school works closely with external agencies and the very good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language contributes to their good progress. Learning is supported by an appropriate amount of homework. Pastoral guidance for pupils is strong but academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils know how well they are doing in their learning but there is scope to improve marking so that pupils benefit from knowing more fully the next steps to take to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably assisted by the senior leadership team, provides effective leadership for the school. It runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The roles of senior leaders are clearly defined and they are focused on improvement. Areas for improvement identified by the last inspection have been addressed well. The school's self-assessment of its effectiveness is accurate. The evaluated and focused school improvement plan identifies a number of key priorities, including raising standards in mathematics and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Extensive assessment data, including tracking the progress of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is now collected by the school. It is well used by class teachers to identify underachievement and to target resources. Improvements in provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been effectively led by the coordinator for special educational needs.

Most of the school's targets were met or exceeded last year and the school has rightly increased the level of challenge for future targets. The school acted decisively to remedy the dip in standards in mathematics. Results and the views of pupils on this subject were analysed, weaknesses identified, and a carefully considered whole-school focus on mathematics initiated. Good use was made of consultants to provide training on mathematics and on what constitutes

effective teaching. Additional staffing was well used to target underachievement. The monitoring of lessons by senior leaders focused on mathematics and statutory arrangements for the performance management of teachers have been aptly linked to improvements in this subject. Identified weaknesses in teaching have been tackled well through training and individual coaching. Planning in this subject has been improved to identify pupils who are underperforming or have not grasped a concept. A discrete session, called 'target time' has been introduced throughout Key Stage 2 to enable teachers to focus on key learning issues in literacy and mathematics. An audit of science provision also took place and suggestions for improving learning shared with staff. The effective leadership of senior managers is complemented by the work of recently strengthened curriculum teams. These teams meet regularly, monitor pupils' work and advise colleagues on subject issues. There is scope to develop the subject management skills of team members further, particularly given the wealth of data the school is now accruing, to give them more oversight and understanding of their areas.

The school consults the views of parents. The majority of parents who returned questionnaires are very supportive of the school but a few would like communication to be strengthened. Governance is effective. Governors are well briefed and provide support and challenge for the school's leadership. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve.

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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	2
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?	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	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so kind and helpful when we inspected your school recently.

I would like to tell you about some of the best things that we found.

- Your school is a good school with a number of outstanding features.
- The care you receive in school is very good.
- Support the school and others give you is also excellent and helps you to learn well.
- You are polite and courteous to visitors and your behaviour is good.
- The headteacher and the leadership team lead the school well.
- You are well taught by your teachers.
- The school provides you with lots of clubs and activities which you greatly enjoy. One of you told us that this was 'the best thing about the school'.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make a few improvements in order to make your school even better. We have asked them to give teachers in charge of subjects greater opportunities to work on the subjects that they oversee. We have also asked that the school improves marking so that all of you know more clearly what the next steps are that you need to take to improve your work.

Once again, many thanks for all your kindness and help when we visited your school.