

Mendell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105017
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308742
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Bradburn
Headteacher	Ms J McCallum
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Allport Lane Bromborough Wirral Merseyside CH62 7HN
Telephone number	0151 3341432
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school in which almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. An above average proportion is eligible for free school meals. Mendell has achieved Healthy School status and holds the Artsmark Silver and Activemark Awards. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for two weeks, but had previously been the deputy headteacher at the school for six years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. They are well cared for and pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is average, but for a few, punctuality is a challenge. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well. They are mindful of others and respect their differences. They are keen to be 'buddies' and quick to offer each other a helping hand. Pupils describe Mendell as a 'friendly' school and recently admitted pupils say they have been warmly welcomed and feel safe. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and how that can be achieved. They enjoy choosing from the healthy lunch menus and benefit from healthy snacks available during playtimes. They are proud of their newly developed travel plan designed to improve all round health and fitness. Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities such as being play leaders or school council members. They give generously to various charities and are good ambassadors for their school when they take part in community events.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. They make steady progress in the Foundation Stage. Standards at Key Stage 1 began to decline just after the previous inspection, but recovered in 2007 and are now average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6. Overall, average standards in English, mathematics and science have been maintained for the past four years. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress from their starting points. The most vulnerable pupils, who have additional needs, sometimes make exceptional progress, in reading, for example, as their confidence and self-esteem increases. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and promote their personal development well. All teachers encourage speaking and listening skills effectively and this is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. The use of assessment information throughout the school, however, is not effective enough to pinpoint exactly what pupils need to do to raise standards and achievement. Pupils are not well enough informed through teachers' marking about their achievements or what they need to do in order to improve. The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily. There is satisfactory progress towards the introduction of French. A good, enjoyable feature for the pupils' is the residential visit to Kingswood where pupils can learn to work and play together in a setting away from home.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and with the support of governors and staff has set out the priorities for development. The wider leadership roles within the school are currently at a transitional stage. The monitoring of the school's performance is strengthening and the headteacher is meeting new challenges confidently. All members of staff are becoming more accountable for pupils' achievement and standards. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on raising pupils' achievement and standards. The untypical teaching situation in the school resulting in all three Key Stage 2 classes having temporary teachers has been managed well. The headteacher has put in support systems and training to ensure quality is maintained. Her very recent evaluations of aspects of the school's performance are accurate. Good quality care has been maintained and the inclusive character of the school ensures that all pupils and parents are welcomed into its community. Governors support and challenge the school in equal measure. They fully share the ambition for its success. Finances are managed

efficiently to ensure satisfactory value for money. Currently, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. Their knowledge and skills are below expectations for their age when they start in the Nursery. This is more marked in their communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. Despite steady progress, their skills are still below expectations when they enter Year 1. Teaching is satisfactory. Children's well-being is given high priority and there are trusting relationships between children and staff. There is sufficient emphasis on the teaching of letter sounds and some Reception children have the confidence to attempt writing independently. Those activities children choose themselves reflect all areas of their learning and give them a lot of enjoyment. The purpose behind the activity, however, is not always clear, because of weaknesses in planning, so children's step-by-step progress cannot be accurately assessed. Children settle to work well and most are confident and curious learners. However, teachers do not always insist that children respond appropriately when they are required to listen, which results in some minor misbehaviour. Parents are made to feel welcome and appreciate the opportunities they have to share information about their children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more effectively in order to raise achievement and standards throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure that planning and assessment in the Foundation Stage are linked clearly to what children need to learn next in all areas of learning.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers' marking to ensure that pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. Standards at Key Stage 1 have been slow to pick up over the past four years, especially in writing. The 2007 national assessments show the beginnings of improvement with standards rising to average levels in reading writing and mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 2 have been average overall in English, mathematics and science for the past four years. Targets set for attainment were met in the most recent National Tests and a commendable number of pupils achieved levels higher than those expected for their age in all three subjects. More focused target-setting for individual pupils is beginning to raise teachers' expectations and pupils' achievement. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady progress overall in relation to their individual targets. Some good progress is evident among the most vulnerable learners because of the effective care and support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are keen to talk about how much they enjoy lessons and other activities. Relationships are good and pupils know that if someone needs help it is their responsibility to tell a teacher. They enjoy taking on caring responsibilities in the playground and learn to channel their views and ideas responsibly through class discussions and the school council. Residential visits and environmental projects help pupils to develop their sense of living and coping in a community. Pupils know the importance of healthy lifestyles and have made a significant contribution to the development of their travel plan. They have a growing awareness of different cultures and beliefs and this helps them to develop their mature attitudes and tolerance of others. They develop some of the important life skills they need by working collaboratively in lessons, listening to and responding to others' needs, for example, through charity fund-raising or helping with the school's Summer Fayre.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although some good lessons were observed during the inspection, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships in lessons are good and pupils are keen to learn because their contributions are valued by teaching staff. Giving pupils the opportunity to work with partners or in small groups encourages pupils' personal development and independence. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to capture pupils' interest and maintain the pace of lessons. In one lesson, pupils used the whiteboard to show the accuracy of each other's calculations when measuring time. This brought the lesson to life and ensured everyone's attention throughout the activity. The whole-school strategy of 'talking to learn' is used well by teachers. The increase in confidence gained by pupils when expressing ideas aloud to a partner has a positive impact on the quality of their writing. Some lessons do not take enough account of pupils' varying abilities. This results in groups of pupils being over challenged and making too little progress because they do not understand what they need to do. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking across the whole curriculum and too little involvement of pupils assessing their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and helps them to achieve satisfactorily in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, staff are undertaking a review of curriculum provision so that it becomes more purposefully tailored to pupils needs. Arts and sports subjects are enhanced through links with the local secondary school. A good link was the Bridging Project, which involves five local primary schools and the local high school. Each year group develops a theme to include a range of subjects, for example, art, music, drama and history. This transition project is highly effective in ensuring a smooth transition to the next stage of learning. There is a good range of after-school activities to encourage pupils to develop their various skills and interests. The school choir and country dance sessions are popular and are accredited activities of the Children's University. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is firmly established. There is an effective programme for social and emotional learning which emphasises the importance of

secure relationships. Links with agencies such as emergency services help to raise pupils' awareness of the potential dangers surrounding drugs and other hazards they might encounter outside school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are very appreciative of the fact that pupils' safety and well-being are of paramount importance to the school. Many express their support, especially for the exceptional way in which the school ensures that the most vulnerable pupils have the resources they need and the staff to deal sensitively with their particular needs. Pupils who need additional support are identified early and swift intervention ensures that they do not fall behind. Pupils feel safe in school. They say that there is no bullying and that they know who to turn to when they need help. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils in school are in place and the school environment is clean and welcoming. There are satisfactory systems to track pupils' academic progress through the school. Regular assessments provide sufficient data to set year- on-year targets for achievement. However, the assessment information is not yet used rigorously enough to check pupils' progress towards their targets and boost their achievement if they are not on track to meet them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher knows the school well and in her previous role as deputy headteacher has helped build up strong relationships with parents and the wider community. Productive links with local businesses and involvement in Liverpool '08 performing arts projects add richness to pupils' learning opportunities. Decisive action has already been taken in reassessing the work of the school and planning appropriate strategies to move it forward. The establishment of an effective leadership team and regaining staff stability are rightly seen as important stages in development. Governors give their full support. They maintain their overview of the school's work through visits and effective communication with the headteacher and parents.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	2

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	3
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	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 Mendell Primary School, Wirral, CH62 7HN

I am sure you will remember that two inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. We can certainly remember the warm welcome you gave us and how happy and full of smiles you all are. I particularly remember those very healthy (and tasty) school lunches. We enjoyed talking to you about your school and were very impressed by your politeness and good manners. We noticed how well behaved you are and how well the grown-ups in school look after you.

Overall, you have a satisfactory school and you are making satisfactory progress in your work. The standards you reach are improving but they could improve faster. I discussed this with your headteacher and came up with some ideas about how this might happen. A lot depends on you of course and how hard you all work, but we are sure you can manage that.

I have asked your teachers to check your progress more closely to make sure you are all being challenged enough by your work and on track to meet your targets. Also, when they mark your work to make sure you know exactly what you need to do next to make it better. I have also asked that teachers in the Nursery and Reception keep a careful eye on how quickly those children learn new skills and plan better challenges for them so they get off to the best possible start.

I hope you had a lovely time at your disco. Remember to keep on working as hard as you can and continue to be as helpful, and as smiley, as you already are.