

Thurstaston Dawpool CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105078
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308759
Inspection date	23 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	219
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Col. Amlot OBE
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Peters
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Lane Thurstaston Wirral Merseyside CH61 0HH

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	23 September 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, how well the school promotes inclusion and awareness of diversity and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, school documents and parents' questionnaires. In addition, there were discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors, pupils and parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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 this report.

Description of the school

This average size school is in a relatively advantaged area but draws its pupils from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds the Artsmark, Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Health Promoting School, Investors in People and the Wirral Inclusion Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school provides an outstanding quality of education. Pupils' personal development is excellent and their achievement is outstanding. The school has gained the overwhelming support and approval of parents. A typical comment reflects many letters to the inspector and sums the school up well: 'This is an outstanding school in which children's educational, physical and social needs are met'...the school allows children to find their talents and nurtures them.'

When they enter Year 1, the majority of pupils are at, and many are above, the levels expected for their age in all the areas of learning. Teachers build exceptionally well upon high quality work in the EYFS so that by the end of Year 6 standards are well above average. In 2007, results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and mathematics and close to average in science. In English, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher level was almost double the national average. The school's analysis of test results identified the areas in science where pupils did not do as well as expected. Although results for 2008 are not yet available, the school's own data indicate that measures taken to secure improvement in science have been successful and that high standards in other subjects have been maintained.

Pupils' outstanding personal development supports their excellent achievement. Pupils of all ages work well together which helps their progress in lessons. Excellent behaviour means that no time is wasted. Above average attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment of their school and contributes to the continuity of their learning. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and know that they can get help if they need it. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pupils understand the importance of exercise and healthy eating, which they show in their lunch-time choices of food. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. Besides showing awareness of the needs of others in their charitable activities and the support they provide for classmates with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils take on responsibility eagerly. Older pupils in particular show great care by acting as 'special friends' for younger pupils. A good example of pupils' preparation for later life is the process of applying to run the school's tuck-shop: being interviewed, working out how to manage finances, deciding what will be sold, establishing prices and so on. The school council gives pupils a voice in the school and they are able to point to improvements, for example in playground equipment, that they have gained. Pupils have a well developed awareness of other cultures. They speak enthusiastically of their learning about other countries and people in lessons introduced by the school to help develop pupils' appreciation of diversity.

Excellent teaching is a key element in pupils' rapid progress. Lessons are well planned and taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers know their pupils very well. They make exceptionally good use of data to record progress and to identify needs. This is how, for example, the gap in science learning was identified and tackled. Pupils make excellent progress because teachers make learning fun and involve pupils exceptionally well in their learning. Teachers provide a high level of individual support and good guidance so that pupils know how to improve their work. This is illustrated well in a pupil's comment: 'Teachers help us sort out anything we have trouble with'...not shouting but helping you to get better.' Classroom assistants and many volunteers from the wider community contribute much to whole class work while providing sensitive support that enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate fully in all the school has to offer.

The key factor in the school's success is the exemplary leadership provided by the headteacher. Without losing sight of the big picture, she pays great attention to detail, for example, being able to 'tell the story' of any pupil in the school. Well supported by the deputy headteacher, senior staff and governors she has set a clear direction for the school that has led to excellent progress since the last inspection and gives the school an excellent capacity for further improvement. The result is a school that provides a community of care in which individuals – children and adults – know they are valued and enabled to do their best. Evaluation of the school's work is rigorous and accurate. There is no complacency but an acute understanding of what could be improved and, crucially, how to do it. Excellent use is made of partnerships, such as links with a local high school to gain professional expertise and resources to enhance work in science. A great deal has been done to engage parents in their children's education and to help them provide support, for example, through mathematics workshops that have contributed to raising girls' standards. Governors provide outstanding support for the school through the use of their professional expertise and fund-raising, the success of which can be seen in the many improvements to buildings and grounds.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the school with a wide range of previous experience and variable skills, notably in their social and emotional development. A significant proportion of children are working at or below age-related expectations. An outstanding feature of the EYFS is the way that staff establish consistent standards of behaviour so that children learn to get on well together. Personal development is excellent. The way that pupils in Year 1 work together and take turns without direct supervision illustrates the successful way that children are prepared, in the EYFS, for life in school. A well-designed mix of independent and supported activities enable children to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in a way that gives them a flying start to their education. By the end of the EYFS, the great majority of children meet or exceed the levels expected for their age with particular strengths in communication, language and literacy. This is the result of excellent management and exceptionally good use of formal and informal assessment together with high quality support, often provided by volunteers from the community.

What the school should do to improve further

Because the school's leadership has a clear understanding of what could be improved and plans to do so, there are no significant areas 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me. I enjoyed being able to talk to so many of you and hearing how proud you are of your school. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you that your school is outstanding. Your achievement is excellent because the school is run exceptionally well and everyone helps you to do your best. You know that you will get help if you need it and you know how to improve your work. You told me that you enjoy learning because your teachers make lessons interesting and fun. When I visited classrooms, I could see that you are right. The school council told me about how much you learn about other countries and people.

It was good to see your excellent behaviour and how well you get on together. I was particularly impressed by the way that Year 6 pupils care for their 'special friends' to help them enjoy their time out of lessons. I read some of the letters that you wrote applying to run the tuck-shop and they showed me how keen you are to take on responsibilities and contribute to the school community. Your work for charities shows that you understand other people's needs and want to make a difference. You show that you understand how to make healthy food choices by your selection vegetables and fruit at lunch-time.

Part of my job is to suggest things that will help to make the school an even better place to learn. However, I have not done so here because the school staff have already worked out what they want to do so that the school continues to improve.

Thank you again for helping me with my work. I wish you well for the future and hope that you will all continue to play your part in making your school an excellent place to learn.