

Garrett Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106433
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309126
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Halliwell
Headteacher	Mrs L McArdle
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Garrett Lane Tyldesley Manchester Lancashire M29 7EY
Telephone number	01942 883340
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, teachers' use of assessment in setting challenging tasks well matched to pupils' different learning needs, and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to make further improvements. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average in size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, although the school serves a typically mixed community. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are of Polish, African or Chinese backgrounds, of which a very small number speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Garrett Hall is a successful school that provides good value for money. At the heart of its work is a determination and commitment to nurture pupils' personal development to enable every pupil to achieve and develop as well as they possibly can. This is evident in the good level of care, guidance and support provided and in the way any barriers to pupils' learning are effectively removed. The school's good capacity for improvement has resulted in stronger teaching, better achievement and higher standards since the time of the previous inspection. Leaders know the school extremely well and make honest, perceptive and accurate evaluations of its work. The vast majority of parents value and appreciate the school. The parents' comments on the 'strong sense of community', 'safe and caring atmosphere' and 'good education provided', typify their views.

Pupils achieve well. They enter Year 1 with attainment typical for their age and make good progress. This enables them to reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In Key Stage 2, pupils' achievement is good in reading, mathematics and science and standards in these subjects are above average by the end of Year 6. Achievement and standards in writing, although satisfactory, are not as good as in the other subjects, principally because of weaknesses in pupils' spelling and their limited capacity to write with flair and imagination. Standards have risen significantly across the school as a direct result of identifying and reaching challenging targets. Boys and girls, the more able pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. This is because of effective teaching and the good curriculum provided, which caters well for pupils' different needs, talents and interests.

Pupils' good personal development is reflected in their very good behaviour, good attendance and enjoyment of school. Their good social and moral development is evident in the harmonious atmosphere in school and in the mature and conscientious way they carry out their responsibilities as school councillors, play leaders and monitors. According to pupils, staff and parents, the school is virtually free of bullying. Pupils develop a good understanding of other cultures, although they are uncertain of the meaning of racism. The effectiveness of the school's personal, social and health education programme is evident in pupils' good understanding of the importance of leading safe and healthy lifestyles.

Most of the teaching is of good quality. Where senior staff have detected weaknesses in teaching, such as lack of pace or encouragement for pupils to find out for themselves, measures have been implemented to make improvements. There are examples of excellent teaching where the teachers' enthusiasm and skill inspires pupils; for example, in solving mathematical problems or, in an English lesson, taking on the role of news editors. The way pupils are managed and helped to understand what is expected of them in lessons is exemplary. Consequently, lessons are purposeful and pupils give their best. In the last two years much has been done to improve the use of assessment. Pupils' learning is assessed in lessons and at the end of each term and school year. The information is used effectively to track and improve their progress and to provide activities that closely match their different learning needs. This has accelerated their learning. On the whole, pupils' work is marked constructively. Personal targets are now being set to move their learning on further. However, because these are recent developments, not all pupils are instantly able to explain what they need to do to improve.

The school benefits from good leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong and dedicated team, providing vision, ambition and energy in their search for excellence. Capable and industrious subject leaders of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) ably assist them in their work. A key strength of the school is the high quality of the frequent checks on performance that take place. Lessons are frequently observed and evaluated. Pupils' work is carefully checked. Assessments of their learning are rigorously analysed. Parents' and pupils' views are regularly sought. The wealth of information gathered enables the school to identify areas requiring improvement. These are then incorporated into a coherent and detailed school improvement plan. This methodical approach to school development has resulted in significant improvements in pupils' mental mathematical and problem-solving skills and their skills of investigation in science. Younger pupils' reading skills are also being advanced and an effective system of assessing pupils' ICT skills has been introduced to raise achievement in this area. All of these strategies have raised standards. Much has been done in an attempt to improve pupils' writing, particularly in preparing them for writing and providing clear criteria to help them evaluate and improve their work. However, raising pupils' enthusiasm for writing is proving more elusive. Governors are very involved and supportive of the school, although only just beginning to consider ways of holding the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

In recent years, children have entered and left the Foundation Stage with attainment broadly expected for their age. This points to steady rather than good progress, which is why the school correctly judged the effectiveness of this area of its work to be satisfactory. Much of the teaching in the Nursery is exemplary and children get off to a flying start. They settle quickly, exploring the myriad of stimulating activities eagerly. Very detailed assessments are made of their achievements, which staff use effectively to guide the next teaching steps. Consequently, children's personal development and spoken language improves rapidly. The school is currently working hard on improving the satisfactory provision in Reception and ensuring that children's passage into Year 1 is smooth and continuous. A key feature is the way children's progress is now being very carefully tracked. Where children's learning appears to slow, teachers and support staff swiftly intervene to raise achievement. This is particularly noticeable in teaching children how to blend letters to read words. Similarly, teaching and learning approaches are being streamlined to make them consistent with good practice. These strategies are making a difference. The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is improving as the school moves closer to achieving the local authority quality standard.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' enjoyment and achievement in writing.

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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	3
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	2
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	1
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	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

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

Thank you for your friendly greeting and for answering my questions so politely. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school.

Your school is a good one, just as you explained. I can understand why you said you like your teachers. They work hard to make your lessons interesting and provide work at just the right level to help you to learn successfully. I was impressed by the way your headteacher and deputy headteacher check all the assessments of your learning to make sure that you are making good progress. This is why standards in your school have been improving well over recent years and are above average in reading, mathematics and science throughout your school.

I noticed how well teachers and support staff look after you, keep you safe and make special efforts to provide lots of extra activities, in and out of school. You told me that was why you enjoyed school, even though you felt there were more activities for boys than girls. Your way of saying thank you appears to be by behaving sensibly and cooperatively and helping each other.

Above all, your headteacher and other members of staff lead your school well. They are constantly trying to improve the school further by checking everything that happens and introducing new methods and ideas. I believe that this is why your skills in reading, mathematics and ICT are good and getting even better.

There is little I can offer to make your school even better but I have one suggestion that may help.

- I have asked your teachers to consider ways of making writing more enjoyable to help improve your skills in writing stories and accounts.