

# Weston Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111114
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	310506
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	113
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jane Ainsworth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Shirley Trimble
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 1999
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lamsickle Lane Weston Village Runcorn Cheshire WA7 4RA
<b>Telephone number</b>	1928 574544
<b>Fax number</b>	1928 568808

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Weston Primary School is a smaller than average primary school, situated in the village of Weston in Runcorn. A significantly lower proportion of pupils than the national average are in receipt of free school meals, and pupils are drawn from areas which experience a wide range of socio-economic conditions, including some which are relatively disadvantaged. Pupils enter Reception with a broad span of abilities but a higher than average proportion have skills which are below national expectations. The school has significantly higher proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than national averages. This is partly because the school has two special education units – an infant assessment unit and a unit at Key Stage 2 for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The school also provides Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision, including pre-school and extended provision. Nearly all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The school has gained Artsmark Silver, Activemark and the Healthy School Standard.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Weston Primary School has positive features but it has made too little progress in the last few years. This is partly because staff morale has been low with frequent staff absences resulting in the use of a high number of supply teachers. As a result, staff have not been working effectively as a team to improve the school in order to ensure it meets the needs of its pupils. The evidence presented to inspectors demonstrates that the headteacher inherited a legacy which the local authority had identified as critical. The headteacher understood what needed to be done and the direction she wanted the school to take: this was shared with governors. However, they were unable to turn this vision into practice because they were frustrated in the face of mounting difficulties, and the external support provided did not enable the school to remove the barriers of poor attitudes and entrenched practice.

Inspectors found pockets of effective, and sometimes, good practice in the school and a willingness in some areas to accept change. In others, there is a reluctance to change. As a result, the quality of provision varies greatly from classroom to classroom and this has impacted negatively on the standards and achievement of pupils who, in most cases, make insufficient progress in their learning. Too much teaching is inadequate. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met, with the curriculum fragmented and failing to provide a balanced coverage. Many subjects are not being managed sufficiently well to deliver improvements. This results in pupils making inadequate progress in many lessons, reaching standards below the national average, and in higher ability pupils making insufficient progress, given their capabilities. Parents are generally supportive of the school and the headteacher but remain worried about current provision and have expressed their concerns.

Pupils are proud of the school and very supportive. They are keen to make a difference themselves. They have recognised that improvements have been made to the fabric of the school to ensure their safety, and they have noted that instances of disruption through poor behaviour have reduced. However, they feel that they have only limited opportunities to participate in enrichment activities, out of classroom learning and sporting opportunities after school. They are unclear about how well they are progressing because monitoring and feedback by teachers are inconsistent across the school. Pupils generally enjoy coming to school and feel that if there was less disruption to their education the school would be a 'great place to learn'. The headteacher and governors remain determined to make their vision a reality but, until now, have struggled to do so because of a reluctance on the part of some staff to accept change.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision in the EYFS is satisfactory and is improving. Weaknesses in the progress children were making have been identified and are being tackled. Monitoring has improved, enabling adults to identify difficulties at an earlier stage and provide early intervention. As a result, children are making much better progress and there is a sharper focus on raising achievement. Positive

links with the adjacent pre-school provision mean that children settle in quickly and are happy in their new setting. They are well cared for and staff work hard at developing their social skills and meeting their emotional needs. Provision runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with little disruption. Continuous provision is planned for, with both child-initiated and teacher-led activities identified. However, children are more confident and focused when working with an adult than when they are working more independently. Resources are satisfactory overall, but a lack of adequate outdoor provision remains a weakness and prevents children from making full use of learning in the outside environment.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that staffing provision is of a sufficient standard to be able to deliver improvements throughout the school.
- Meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Develop the roles of middle managers and coordinators in core and foundation subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that most lessons are good or better.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils enter the school with skill levels that are broadly below those typical of their age, and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in recent years have been below, or well below, the national averages. This represents inadequate progress.

In 2007, the school identified progress within the EYFS as an area for improvement, and intervention has led to children making better progress through Reception in 2008. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below national averages for some years. This position was unchanged in 2008. The school's own data show that standards reached in Key Stage 2 are also below the 2007 national averages. Only one statutory target, in mathematics, will be met, if the school's data are validated.

The variability of standards in Key Stage 2 is partly a consequence of the small numbers in each year group, but also because pupils' progress has been erratic in both this key stage and during their time in Key Stage 1. Pupils' learning is fragmented due to the high level of staff absence, frequent changes of teachers and the relatively high proportion of inadequate lessons. In some classes, pupils make satisfactory and even good progress; in others they make very slow progress, leading to variable standards and achievement, despite intervention strategies. Boys perform less well, particularly in English. Higher ability pupils make inadequate progress, and do not reach the higher grades in relation to their abilities. In 2008 the school's unvalidated data show that no pupil reached the higher levels in English at Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make best progress in Key Stage 1 where they receive good support. Progress in the foundation subjects is inadequate, due mainly to the fact that these subjects are not taught consistently within the curriculum; weaker teaching was also observed in these areas.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are a credit to the school. They are polite and welcoming and happy to help by opening doors and showing visitors around. Their moral and social development is good, but the lack of opportunity to learn about diversity or develop an understanding of spirituality means that their development in these areas is patchy. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to

adopt healthy lifestyles. They benefit from the opportunities for physical activity, including swimming. They enjoy 'letting off steam' at break and lunchtime, but the lack of play equipment hampers more creative play. Equally, pupils appreciated opportunities in the past to participate in organised activities after school. Unfortunately, these are currently unavailable.

Pupils understand the need to eat healthily and many choose to do so, although sometimes packed lunches contain less healthy alternatives, such as crisps. Pupils feel safe, and are even beginning to make their own risk assessments through the school council. They identified that bullying was very rare and was dealt with effectively when it occurred. Generally, pupils enjoy coming to school as evidenced by improving attendance, which is now better than the national average. Pupils identified that behaviour around the school has also improved, although some lessons are at times disrupted, particularly where teaching is less engaging.

The school council is at an embryonic stage of development and would like to do more to improve the school and the community. Although the school is involved in a few community events, these provide only limited opportunities for pupils to engage with a wider range of people and build positive relationships with those from different backgrounds. Pupils' skills in terms of group work, problem solving and the ability to learn independently are not being sufficiently encouraged in those lessons where teaching is weak. In the EYFS a strong emphasis is placed on positive relationships and behaviour.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

While some good teaching was observed, too high a proportion of the teaching seen was inadequate. Parents also expressed concerns to inspectors over the disruption to their children's learning caused by staff absence and frequent changes of teacher.

Where teaching was good, lessons were well planned and pupils were managed effectively. Clear routines were evident and good use was made of visual stimuli to engage pupils. The work was appropriate and interesting for pupils, who commented that they particularly enjoyed opportunities to engage in practical activities and work collaboratively. They said they disliked lessons where they were given mundane tasks or had to copy out work.

Teaching is inconsistent across the school. In too many lessons pupils are occupied, rather than challenged. Inspectors noted that where teaching was weak, pupils and teaching assistants were expected to sit for too long listening to the teacher rather than actively participating. Pupils' work revealed that the pace of learning was often slow with little to show for their efforts. Pupils of differing abilities are also often expected to complete the same task; this, in turn, means that pupils, particularly those of higher ability are insufficiently challenged, contributing to poor attainment at the higher levels. Learning in the foundation subjects is particularly weak; there is no continuity of provision, and teachers' knowledge is less secure than in literacy and numeracy. Use of assessment across the school is inconsistent, with marking far too often being functional rather than informative.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum is not broad and balanced, and there is considerable discontinuity from year to year and from subject to subject. More than adequate time is given over to literacy and

numeracy. There are no coordinators in several subjects, and insufficient time is apportioned to several of the foundation subjects, including religious education (RE) and geography. The school has identified the need to develop a cohesive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and to establish the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning or SEAL programme, but this has not been put in place. The school is still not meeting requirements in RE and there are gaps in provision in other subjects. This means that, in most foundation subjects, pupils are being excluded from receiving what is prescribed in the National Curriculum.

The curriculum is also currently not meeting the needs of those pupils with specific talents in subjects. The attempt to develop a creative and integrated curriculum in the afternoon has led to confusion. This is because the management of these subjects is weak or at an early stage of development, and insufficient knowledgeable support is available to teachers to develop planning and learning in these areas. Lack of effective subject management has also led to a neglect of resources in several areas. In those subjects, particularly without a coordinator, there is no-one to identify the resources which need to be prioritised to support learning. For example, there is a lack of scientific equipment to support practical experiments. There has been a reluctance to engage pupils in learning opportunities outside the classroom, and there is only a limited range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils value these opportunities as they provide real breadth to their learning, and enable them to experience and develop new interests.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 4

Many aspects of care and support are satisfactory. However, pupils' progress is inadequately monitored, an issue which was identified during the last inspection. Despite several attempts to set up structures, procedures are not being followed by all staff. As a result, the greater majority of pupils are not well informed about their progress. This makes it difficult to identify pupils who are falling behind in their work at an early stage, and then to put effective intervention strategies in place to re-engage and support their learning. There is very little provision for gifted and talented pupils. Procedures to use individual education plans for those pupils with learning difficulties or specific needs are not being used effectively and consistently across the school. The quality of marking varies greatly and teachers' comments do not give sufficient guidance to help pupils to make the next steps in their learning. In the EYFS, transition arrangements with the pre-school and partnerships with parents are becoming well-established and these parents are generally positive about the care the school provides for their children.

Safeguarding is one area where clear progress has been made at Weston. Improvements have been made to the infrastructure of the school and a surrounding fence prevents unauthorised access. Risk assessments and protection procedures are in place. The school also makes satisfactory use of multi-agency support.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

On appointment, the headteacher inherited a school which had a series of significant weaknesses which had been previously recognised by the local authority. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school but has not been able to overcome the significant barriers to improvement. The governing body supports and shares her vision but has also been frustrated by its inability to address, as a matter of urgency, these weaknesses. Staff absence, low morale, a reluctance to

change, and entrenched and ineffective practice means that little progress has been made. This ineffective practice includes poor teaching and learning, inadequate coverage of the curriculum, and an inability to embed and utilise systems such as assessment and monitoring. Intensive support was not effective in challenging weak practice. The school's middle management is underdeveloped and coordinators' roles have been neglected, resulting in a lack of quality and cohesion in the curriculum. There has been a lack of accountability and engagement in managing subjects effectively. As a result, community cohesion is not well supported through the curriculum. Parents are supportive of the school, but also aware of some of these issues and are concerned about the impact on their children's learning. The school has not made sufficient progress since the last inspection and as yet does not provide value for money. It does not currently have the capacity to improve, and it will have to work effectively in partnership with the local authority and governors to implement the necessary changes.



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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Inspection of Weston Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 4RA

This letter is to tell you about my recent visit to inspect your school. Following this, I have decided that your school needs to improve. This means that although your school does some things well, in some very important areas there are weaknesses which I believe need to be sorted out quickly in order for you to make real progress in your learning.

Inspectors were impressed with your honesty and your concerns, as well as those of your parents, that in many classes your education was disrupted by frequent changes of teacher and teacher absence. We agree that this certainly has not helped and have asked Miss Trimble and your governors to look into this as a matter of urgency to ensure that this disruption does not continue. We also want all your lessons to be of a good standard, so you make better progress. You said that you enjoyed those lessons where you were able to become more involved in your learning. You particularly enjoy researching information and working together to solve problems. You do not enjoy copying and tend to get restless when you are asked to listen for long periods. The teachers are determined to take your views to heart and will be working hard to make more of your lessons more interesting and enjoyable. For your part, you will also need to concentrate that little bit harder and pay attention that little bit more.

Inspectors identified that although you have lots of lessons in literacy and numeracy, there are other subjects that are not taught as much. You enjoy opportunities to be creative, and to find out about other places and people and the lives they lead. So I have asked your teachers to look at their planning and management of all subjects, and make sure that you get your fair share of lessons in the whole range of subjects on a more regular basis. This should also involve more opportunities for you to work outside your classroom, participate in more after-school activities, visit more interesting places and have more visitors coming into the school to get you thinking.

You will not be surprised to learn that I have asked the school to improve the weaknesses identified above as quickly as possible. You and your teachers will be provided with help and support to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress everyone is making. You, your teachers, parents and governors will all need to work together to ensure the school improves as quickly as possible.

I wish you every success in the future.