

Culcheth Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111180
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310527
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Bland
Headteacher	Mr Craig Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Warrington Road Culcheth Warrington Cheshire WA3 5HH
Telephone number	01925 764312
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school is situated in a residential district on the outskirts of Warrington. Pupil numbers have declined in recent years and an unusually high number of pupils join and leave the school at various stages throughout the year. All the pupils have English as their home language. Most are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from other heritages, including a small number of Gypsy/Roma pupils who come from Traveller families. The school draws its pupils from a wide area, with around one fifth of its pupils living outside the school's immediate locality. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is larger than in most other schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is smaller than average.

The school was given permanent Eco School status in 2004. It also holds the Healthy Schools Award, the Gold Activemark and the Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Standards are rising steadily in this inclusive school and its overall effectiveness is good. From relatively low starting points on entry to the Reception class, good provision enables pupils to progress well and they achieve standards at the end of Year 6 which exceed the national average in science and mathematics and match it in English.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has developed an effective and systematic approach to school improvement. Staff teamwork is a major strength, and the school is supported by a well-informed and proactive governing body. The strategic deployment of well trained teaching assistants ensures that pupils with additional learning needs are served well and they make good progress as a result. Systems to assure the quality of provision through regular monitoring and evaluation are firmly in place, and the school has an accurate and detailed picture of its strengths and the areas for development. The progress pupils make is regularly assessed and carefully tracked, and the school sets ambitious and challenging targets for improvement. However, individual targets for mathematics and English are not consistently shared with pupils, and as a result, they do not always understand thoroughly what the next steps in their learning should be.

There is currently a sharp focus on raising standards in English across the school so that they may match the high achievement in mathematics and science. Although it is too early for a full evaluation of the success of this drive, the school's data for the current year have already begun to show improved progress and achievement in literacy. This is the case across all the year groups, including those in Key Stage 1, where standards were below average in 2007. These improvements are directly linked to the impact of a range of new teaching and learning strategies.

The quality of teaching is good, and pupils make good progress and achieve well in their lessons. They are not always given enough guidance on how to improve their work, however, because marking is of inconsistent quality. In recent years, the school has been working on designing a curriculum which will develop the key skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) across the subject areas. This is work in progress, but there is already evidence of a positive impact on standards in literacy and pupils say how much they enjoy their lessons, and that the topics they study are 'interesting and fun'. Because of this good level of engagement with their work, they apply themselves well. The enrichment added by a range of good quality extra-curricular opportunities also contributes well to their personal development.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is fostered particularly well through assemblies, through 'reflection time' at the end of each day and through the international dimension the school has developed in its partnership with a school in South Africa. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and representing their school in community events. They benefit from the school's attractive and well-maintained learning environment. Their behaviour is good and they interact well with each other and with the adults in school. Parents appreciate the school's welcoming ethos, the good care their children are given and the quality of education the school provides. Pastoral care is effective and the school supports its vulnerable pupils well. There is a strong commitment to inclusion, seen, for example, in the good arrangements to welcome pupils who join the school after the Foundation Stage and in the good support given to pupils from Traveller families when they return from extended absence.

The school has good capacity to make further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Foundation Stage class enables children to make a good start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. From below average starting points, they make good progress, particularly in their personal development. However, in 2007, at the end of the Reception Year, standards in literacy and numeracy remained below expectations for the age group. Daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds have been introduced this year and are helping to boost early reading and writing skills well, although it is too early to measure the full impact of this initiative on standards. The quality of teaching is good and the curriculum is imaginatively planned, with activities, indoors and out, well matched to the children's needs, providing enjoyment and interest for them. The children interact well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the caring staff. Vulnerable children and those with additional learning needs are identified promptly and supported well. The experienced Reception class teacher manages the class well and has established an effective team with the capable teaching assistant. An attractive learning environment has been extended to include a well-resourced outdoor area, which is used well to promote children's social development and skills across all the areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking across the school.
- Ensure that pupils know and understand their individual learning targets for improvement in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Good teaching in Key Stage 1 enables pupils to progress well. The proportion achieving the higher level in national assessments in reading and writing was close to the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved well in comparison with similar pupils nationally. Progress is good in Key Stage 2 and in 2007, standards in English matched the national average. Standards in mathematics were higher than this and in science they were well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. These good standards represent sustained improvement over a four year period. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved at least as well as their peers at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007, in relation to their abilities and starting points and this reflects the good provision the school makes for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's nurturing approach develops pupils' confidence and self-esteem well, valuing and recognising their different achievements. Pupils are proud to receive recognition for good work, good behaviour and acts of kindness. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, promoted through interactive assemblies and through reflection time at the end of the day. They understand the behaviour code and observe it well. There are good opportunities for them to develop sporting or musical skills. The school prepares them very well for life in a multicultural society by extending their awareness of other cultures through

links with a school in Soweto. The influential school council represents the pupil voice well and pupils know their views are taken seriously. The school's long established work to promote ecological awareness is being sustained and pupils also have a good awareness of healthy lifestyle issues and how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils enjoy acting as play leaders and reading buddies for younger children. Attendance is broadly average, as a result of the range of positive incentives in place and the school's ongoing efforts, in partnership with the local authority, to work with and support families of pupils with irregular patterns of attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes effectively, behaviour in lessons is good and pupils apply themselves well and make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and employ a range of effective teaching and learning strategies. Good use of interactive whiteboards adds to pupils' interest and enjoyment in lessons. Most lessons are well planned, with activities designed to meet the learning needs of all pupils. The pace of learning is brisk and most activities carry appropriate levels of challenge. Skilful teaching assistants are deployed to good effect and this is a key factor underpinning the good progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systematic assessment provides information which is used well to identify problems or underachievement. Such issues are addressed promptly and effectively with interventions and additional support. As a result of good teaching, the rate of pupils' progress and standards in literacy are continuing to rise and high standards in mathematics and science are being sustained. Some good practice in marking is evident in pupils' books, but this is not consistent across the school and pupils do not always receive clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' academic and personal development. It is planned well to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers have also begun to make useful links between subjects. This provides opportunities for pupils to develop and practise these skills through work on topics that capture their interest well. This approach to curriculum planning is at a developmental stage and has yet to show its full impact on raising standards in literacy across the school. Pupils use ICT to carry out research and to present their work attractively and this develops their computer skills well. Learning is enriched through choir and instrumental music tuition, and a range of extra sports activities for pupils in both Key Stages 1 and 2. The strong link with the high school helps support provision to teach French and enables access to additional sports facilities. High quality artwork reflects input from specialist visitors and successful art events. There is a good programme of visits to places of interest and pupils in both key stages enjoy residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good support for pupils' social and emotional growth, helping them to develop independence and skills in managing their relationships. Pupils say they feel safe and

that there is always someone they can go to if they have a problem. Safeguarding systems are in place and meet statutory requirements. Parents say they feel welcome in school and family support programmes encourage them to become involved in their children's learning. Good links with external agencies help to ensure appropriate support for pupils with additional social, emotional, health or learning needs. Well managed systems to track progress ensure that those needs are identified promptly and this enables remedial or support action to be taken. The school uses its good tracking and assessment systems to help it set accurate and challenging learning targets for all of its pupils. Nevertheless, not enough is done to ensure pupils' understanding of their targets, so that they can be used as an aid to accelerate progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The experienced and effective headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, leads the school well, uniting staff and governors in a shared vision for school improvement. School leaders and increasingly effective subject coordinators carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The impact of good strategic planning, based on detailed analysis of pupils' progress, can be seen in the continuing improvement over time in standards at the end of Key Stage 2. The school recognises that there is more to be done to raise overall standards in Key Stage 1 and standards in English in Key Stage 2. The school is addressing these challenges energetically and can show evidence that it is on track to meet challenging targets for 2008. Its leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Resources are deployed well to achieve good outcomes for pupils and good links with the high school enable the school to access additional curriculum support and facilities. Supportive governors are also able to act as critical friends to the school and, through their contribution as voluntary reading helpers, often play an active part in helping to raise standards.

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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	1
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

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

Thank you for the lovely, friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We found that the school is giving you a good standard of education and we were pleased to see that you work hard and make good progress in your lessons. We think the staff look after you well and that this good care is helping you to behave well and get on well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. You achieve high standards in mathematics and science, and the staff are working hard to raise standards in English to the same high level. 'Letters and Sounds' and the 'Big Write' are being used well to help this to happen and we saw that you are starting to make faster progress as a result of these new teaching programmes. Keep up the good work!

We've asked the headteacher and the staff to make the school even better, by:

- improving the way your work is marked, so that you are given good guidance on how to make it better
- making sure that you all know and understand your learning targets for mathematics and English.

We think that both of those improvements will help you to achieve as well as you possibly can. I hope that you'll all carry on finding out that learning is fun (as your school motto correctly says) and that Culcheth Community Primary School will go from strength to strength.

With my very best wishes.