

Great Sankey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111181
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310528
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Maureen Coleman

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	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah McCurrie
Headteacher	Mr Jim Courtney
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Liverpool Road Great Sankey Warrington Cheshire WA5 1SB
Telephone number	01925 723445
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Great Sankey Primary is a larger than average school and serves an urban area of mixed housing. A lower than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as a second language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school was awarded Investors in People, Quality Mark and the Sports Activemark in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Great Sankey Primary provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils' personal development and the strong attention to the care and well-being of all pupils are strengths of the school.

Children enter Nursery with skills that are broadly as expected for their age. Throughout the school they make satisfactory progress and they leave at the end of Key Stage 2 with broadly average standards in English and mathematics and above average standards in science. Currently, pupils are making slower progress in mathematics than in English and science and this is recognised by the school. Although pupils in Year 6 are not fully on track to achieve their statutory targets in mathematics, the school is putting strategies in place to address this. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and although strengthening there are some inconsistencies throughout the school. Some lessons lack challenge, especially for the more able pupils, and provide few opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Consequently, pupils' progress slows on these occasions. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers because they receive good support from teaching assistants and there are effective strategies to address their individual needs. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school as reflected in their outstanding levels of attendance. Parents' questionnaires are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the staff's commitment to the care and well-being of their children. The following parental comment represents the views of many in this respect: 'I always find the staff to be helpful and sensitive in relation to any issues my children have at school. I am constantly impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and their generosity in giving up time for out of school clubs.'

Good pastoral care and guidance ensure that pupils behave well, and feel safe and valued. One child echoed the views of many saying, 'Teachers are kind; and unkind people are told off.' There is an active school council and its members have helped to improve the quality of playtimes for their peers by deciding on new playtime resources. The curriculum is satisfactory. Effective provision is made for French and for information and communication technology (ICT). This is complemented by a wide variety of enrichment activities, including residential visits and an impressive range of after-school clubs.

Parents speak highly of the headteacher and friendly approachable staff. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear educational direction which is moving the school forward. However, subject leaders do not take sufficient responsibility for raising standards in their curriculum areas. The school has addressed the majority of issues from its last inspection effectively. For example, there is no longer any inadequate teaching and the proportion of lessons which are good has improved slightly. The school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join the Nursery with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Reception the great majority are working securely at the expected levels but few exceed them. This is particularly the case in children's overall communication and social

development. Regular assessment of children's progress leads to well planned activities, especially for the less able children, that ensure they all enjoy their time and make satisfactory progress overall. Satisfactory leadership means that the Foundation Stage runs smoothly as a unit. The purpose-built unit provides children with a bright, orderly environment in which to learn. Although access to the outdoors is limited to certain times of the day, there are suitable opportunities provided for children to learn through play. Staff develop good relationships with children so they quickly settle to routines. Occasionally the planned lesson activities are too directed by staff and this restricts children's engagement and opportunities for them to take greater responsibilities for their own learning. For example, during question and answer sessions adults sometimes ask questions that do not stretch children's thinking sufficiently and then adults provide children with too many answers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils, and more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensure that subject leaders take greater responsibility for raising standards and achievement in their curriculum areas.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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

Children start Year 1 with standards that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are broadly in line with those found nationally. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Evidence seen during the inspection and in current school data shows that pupils' progress is most rapid in Years 3 and 4, where good teaching and appropriately challenging work are raising standards effectively. Although pupils' mathematical skills are developing well in the Foundation Stage, progress has recently slowed throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 achievement in mathematics is not as good as in English and science. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of timely and effective intervention strategies to support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their time at school and describe it as 'kind' and 'great' because they have lots of friends and lessons are interesting. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. They have a satisfactory awareness of other cultures through different areas of the curriculum but have few opportunities to become more aware of the richness of the multicultural society in which they live. Pupils are sensitive to others' needs and world issues, for example they are generous fundraisers and older pupils have written persuasively about endangered animals. Pupils form very good relationships with each other and staff and say that bullying or other unkind incidents are very rare and dealt with swiftly. Their excellent attendance demonstrates their happiness at school. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The many sporting after-school clubs are highly popular. Pupils have good opportunities to

take on responsibilities, for example as elected members of the school council, and older pupils run the breaktime healthy snack shop. Most pupils behave very well in lessons and around school. Those who find self-discipline more difficult respond well to staff's regular reminders and support so that the school operates as a very orderly community. Pupils generally collaborate well in lessons but there are few opportunities for them to use their initiative to move their own learning forward. Pupils' positive attitudes to work and average levels of basic skills mean that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their learning to support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some examples of good practice. Where teaching is satisfactory the pace of lessons slows as teachers spend too much time directing activities and learning. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge, in particular to meet the needs and interests of the more able pupils and this restricts their ability to reach higher standards. Where teaching is good pupils are well challenged and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning resulting in them being fully engaged and highly motivated. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across subjects and year groups. Written feedback on pupils' work ranges from unhelpful cursory comments to detailed information guiding and supporting pupils towards the next steps in their learning. Assessment information is used satisfactorily to plan future learning. A comprehensive tracking system is in place which identifies pupils' progress and any underachievement. An effective team of teaching assistants provide focused support for the small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils make the same rate of progress as their peers. All staff treat pupils with the utmost dignity and respect resulting in very good relationships between pupils and staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum covers all the required areas and includes the teaching of French for pupils from Year 1 upwards. Curriculum activities vary in the way they successfully engage pupils' interest and sustain their concentration. A great deal of pupils' learning results from over-directed tasks and this restricts opportunities for independent enquiry. Since the previous inspection the school has successfully improved the links made between subjects, including the use of ICT. In some classes pupils use ICT to good effect, for example there are illustrated booklets written by Years 1 and 2 based on nursery rhymes, and by Year 4 of pirate stories. However, this good practice is not seen consistently across the school. Regular assessments of pupils' progress leads to appropriate adaptations of the curriculum for those who are finding work difficult. In response to a recent survey of pupils' preferred learning styles, teachers now ensure that they cater for these in lessons through providing, for example, visual clues and practical activities as well as oral input. This is helping to increase pupils' engagement in their learning. Links with the secondary school enhance the sports provision, while the residential visits for pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 help to develop, in particular, their personal and social skills. A varied range of extra-curricular clubs, including sports, chess, computers and choir, further enhances the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in a happy and supportive environment. Child protection procedures, risk assessments and all other checks to safeguard pupils are securely in place and meet current requirements. Relationships are very good and pupils feel valued as individuals. They feel safe and secure in school. Pupils respond well to the school's clear codes of conduct. Any rare instances of bullying are quickly dealt with and pupils know there is always someone there to help them sort out any problems. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English are well supported by adults. This enables them to be fully included in all activities and make the same rate of progress as their classmates. Specialist outside help is readily available when needed and this is effective in supporting pupils' learning. Pupils' progress is monitored well and information used to identify those needing extra help quickly. However, although pupils generally know how well they have achieved, written comments on pupils' work are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is highly committed and focused in moving the school forward. Together with the senior management team he gives clear direction and has acted decisively to eradicate inadequate teaching seen at the last inspection and to improve the proportion of good lessons. The leadership have introduced a comprehensive tracking system to monitor pupils' progress. As a result of the detailed and well embedded procedures for monitoring the school's work, the senior leadership team have a satisfactory understanding of the school's general strengths and areas for improvement. Subject leaders however, do not take full responsibility for monitoring the work of their subjects. The implementation of strategies for subject leaders to develop their role in raising standards and pupils' achievement are at a very early stage of development. Planning and coordination of the curriculum are effective and financial and material resources are equitably and beneficially employed. The school's self-evaluation is generated through discussion at all levels of leadership and has clearly set out the right priorities. Pupils are consulted and their views incorporated into the school's planning. Governors provide satisfactory support to the leadership and are committed to improving the quality of provision for pupils. However, governors do not hold the leadership team fully to account for the achievement and standards of work of all pupils. A strong feature of the leadership team is the good quality of care and support it gives to pupils.

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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	1
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	3

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	3
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

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

Following our visit to your school I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspectors for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. I would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

Overall, Great Sankey gives you a satisfactory education. Pupils and parents told us that Great Sankey is a caring school and we agree. You work hard and are well behaved. Your headteacher is very caring and committed to improving your school and teaching is satisfactory. By the time you are ready for secondary school you have made satisfactory progress and have learned much that will help you. You told us you feel safe in school, enjoy being there and that teachers are very approachable and helpful and we agree.

It is also our job to help the school to improve and we have asked your teachers to help you do better in mathematics and achieve a higher standard of work. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that those pupils who find the work too easy are given harder work to make them think more, and that you take more responsibility for your own learning by having greater opportunities to work independently. Those teachers who manage subjects have also been asked to help you to reach higher standards of work.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Great Sankey Primary an even better school.