

Hale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111294
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	310560
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Little
Headteacher	Miss Jane Priestley
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Hesketh Road Hale Village Liverpool Merseyside L24 4AN
Telephone number	0151 4253023
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Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is located in the village of Hale, to the south-east of the city of Liverpool. It is smaller than average and the number of pupils has fallen over recent years. Pupils now come from a wide range of areas beyond the village with significant numbers of pupils starting or leaving the school during each school year. Most pupils are White British, although there are considerable variations in their socio-economic backgrounds. The overall proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. They are well cared for by staff and parents know that their children are in safe hands. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are outstanding because they enjoy their learning so much. Pupils say that teachers make lessons fun. Some pupils from Years 3 and 4, for example, talked excitedly about the mock 'Roman Invasion' that took place in the playground. It is little wonder that attendance has improved, from being below average in the past to slightly above the national average. Relationships are outstanding. The courtesy and respect pupils show towards others stem from their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils feel safe in school and say that bullying and racism are things of the past. Teaching and learning are good because lessons are full of challenging activities. Pupils are taught to be 'independent thinkers' and to solve problems. Teachers take account of all pupils' needs so that those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given the support they need to help them achieve well. The curriculum brings out the best in pupils. They make good progress in literacy and numeracy skills, and information and communication technology (ICT) is integrated well into learning across subjects. Some exciting work in the Arts resulted from a project, which involved pupils working alongside others from other small schools. Physical education includes swimming and there are active residential visits to justify the school's achievement of the National Healthy Schools Award.

The small and changing nature of each year group of pupils leads to varying standards and makes year on year comparisons difficult. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 but fewer pupils than expected reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, this represents good progress because when these children entered Reception, their knowledge and skills were below the expectations for their age. A significant number of children joining the school are well below expected levels in communication, language and literacy, mathematical and social development. Standards are now securely average by the end of Year 6, with English and mathematics results exceeding the national averages. This reflects pupils' good overall progress through the school. Effective assessment and target-setting combined with more focused teaching has lifted standards, most notably in mathematics. The school exceeded all of its targets in 2007 and has confidently raised its expectations for the current academic year.

The leadership and management of the school are good. All staff share a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and fulfil their roles well in the rigorous pursuit of better standards and quality of education. Although awareness of what they wish to improve led the school to lower evaluations of achievement and personal development, self-evaluation is sharp and accurate. Swift action is taken where needs are identified. A good example is the way the school tackled falling standards in mathematics. When careful analysis of assessment information revealed gaps in pupils' skills, whole-staff training and specific teaching for groups of pupils according to their need were introduced. This raised the confidence of teachers and pupils and, consequently, levels of attainment. There has been good improvement in relation to issues in the previous report. For example, science skills are now taught well and standards improved in the most recent tests. Pupils' cultural awareness has improved and contributes significantly to their outstanding personal development. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent as seen by the higher targets they have set for 2008. Governors provide good support and challenge when holding the school to account and manage finances effectively to provide good

value for money. The school is on an upward trend. Given the consistently good teaching, improving standards and strong leadership there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children join the Reception class having had limited pre-school experiences. They settle well into their new surroundings and make particularly good progress in their personal development. They enjoy the challenge of activities, whether teacher-led or independent. The outside area is safe and used well to encourage children's social development and skills across all areas of learning. The quality of teaching is good. The day is planned thoughtfully to cater for the different needs and abilities of the children. Daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds help to boost early reading and writing skills. There are good links with parents. All speak highly of the way they are welcomed and of the way information about their children's progress is shared. The experienced Foundation Stage leader manages the class well. She has good insights into what is needed and with the teaching assistants has established an effective team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the numbers of pupils who achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well overall during their time in school. Children's abilities vary substantially when joining the school and the small size and changing constitution of each year group make direct year on year comparisons difficult. However, overall attainment on entry is below the expectations for their age with a significant number well below the expected levels in communication, language and literacy, mathematical and social development. Although the children make effective progress, overall attainment is still below that expected at the end of Reception. Progress picks up as pupils move through the school. Standards are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1, although fewer than expected reach the above average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The combination of good teaching and pupils' excellent attitudes to learning in Years 3 to 6 leads to good overall achievement and is successfully raising standards. The 2007 national test results for Key Stage 2 show good improvement over the previous year. The school exceeded the national averages in English and mathematics, and significantly exceeded their own targets at both the average and higher levels. Science results also improved and were around the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve so well and enjoy school because of their outstanding personal development. Pupils hold strong moral values and excellent relationships are underpinned by outstanding spiritual development. They have excellent attitudes to work and willingly take on other responsibilities which help the school run smoothly. Older pupils are extremely reliable playground buddies and exceptional role models to those they care for. All are really proud of their school and do their best to make it safe and enjoyable. A few parents raised concerns about pupils' behaviour but the vast majority, and the pupils themselves, have a much more

positive view. Indeed, behaviour is exemplary in all areas of the school. Pupils appreciate the healthy choices of food available to them and are well aware of the need to keep fit. They thrive on the challenge of lessons and acquire the necessary skills in literacy, numeracy and use of ICT to help secure their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding teaching. Teachers prepare lessons well and use resources such as interactive whiteboards effectively to maintain a good pace to learning. Teachers' expectations are generally high so lessons are challenging. For example, Year 3 pupils were tested well when they had to arrange themselves in a human positive/negative number line. Their learning was made more purposeful by thinking of the everyday uses of positive and negative numbers. However, teachers do not consistently challenge above average pupils in Key Stage 1 to reach their full potential. The school has correctly identified variations in pupils' progress through the school. As part of a school's network project, teachers have introduced ways of helping pupils to improve their thinking skills. The use of clear visual modelling, thinking time and detailed planning has a good impact on teaching as well as learning, and has contributed to improved standards. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress. Their individual skills and their teamwork ensure that they are a valued part of the teaching force.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides well for pupils' needs and helps them to achieve well. The inclusion of French in Key Stage 2, enriching experiences such as visits and visitors to school, and projects undertaken alongside other local schools gives added breadth to learning and heightens interest for pupils. Involvement in the 'Children Challenge Industry' project gives pupils insights into the world of work. There is good emphasis on the teaching of basic literacy, mathematical and ICT skills. These are practised well across subjects. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for, often supported individually by teachers and classroom assistants. The school acknowledges and accepts some parents' views that the satisfactory range of after-school clubs could be extended. It is actively seeking ways to improve that aspect of provision. The curriculum for personal, social and health education, and citizenship is well established and has a significant impact on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are unanimous in the view that the school takes good care of its pupils. The school works well with outside agencies to provide the best possible support for the most vulnerable. Adults who work in the school have won pupils' trust because they are always on hand to give help and support when it is needed. Pupils feel safe in school. They are made aware of any risks and have clear codes of practice for their safety. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Systems for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics are rigorous and are used effectively to identify specific needs and set relevant targets. Teachers give good

guidance in their marking of English and mathematics, but the quality is not matched in other subjects, especially in writing in those subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well, which accounts for the good recent improvements seen in standards. There is very good teamwork among staff and openness to initiatives and training to improve teaching and learning have a good impact on the school's overall performance. Leaders promote the care and welfare of pupils vigorously and have very successfully nurtured pupils' personal development. However, there is scope to set and use more challenging targets to raise further the achievement of above average pupils in Key Stage 1. The school has strong support from governors and parents. Governors are effective critical partners and monitor the school's progress well. They manage finances astutely in order to maintain the best possible provision for 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?	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	3
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?	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
How well 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	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**

Inspection of Hale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Hale Village, L24 4AN

As you know I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. I have to say a very big 'thank you' for the extremely friendly welcome you gave me. I found your manners and your behaviour to be excellent, reflecting how very well you are all growing up. I am also impressed by the way you have improved your attendance. That's very important, so keep it up.

I think that yours is a good school and I also know how proud you are of it. I could see that during your assembly when you received your Healthy Schools Award. It's good to see that you know how to keep healthy and really enjoy those fantastic school dinners each day! I was pleased to see how much you enjoy your lessons and that you are full of praise for your teachers who are doing a really good job. In fact all of the grown-ups take good care of you. Your excellent attitudes help you all to make good progress overall.

Although you have a good school, your teachers, parents and school governors would like it to be even better. To help that to happen I have asked your teachers to work especially hard with pupils in Key Stage 1 to help more of them achieve better results in reading, writing and mathematics.