

Accrington Spring Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119185
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313213
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	372
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Haworth
Headteacher	Miss Stephanie Grimshaw
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Exchange Street Accrington Lancashire BB5 0JD
Telephone number	01254 399009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Spring Hill is a larger than average primary school. It serves an area characterised by significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. About 86% of the pupils are from Pakistani backgrounds and a high proportion of these are at an early stage of learning English when they join the Reception classes. Almost all the rest of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than the start and end of an academic year is high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In November 2006 the school was inspected and issued with a notice to improve because of underachievement in Years 3 to 6. The progress pupils make and their achievement in relation to their starting points are now satisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Spring Hill is a satisfactory school which has made good improvements in its provision over the last year. It is seeing the beginnings of success in improved test results and in standards rising from the very low on entry to the school to below average at Year 6. The driving factor behind this has been more reliable and effective use of assessments to inform pupils on how well they are doing and in guiding them on how to get better. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully, and timely and appropriate measures put in place if weaknesses are uncovered. The inadequate teaching seen a year ago in Years 3 to 6 has been largely eliminated, but weaknesses still exist and so teaching and learning are judged to be satisfactory. A key weakness is where teachers do not provide suitably challenging activities in lessons or give pupils enough time to talk about their learning. The school is working to achieve consistently good teaching across all classes so that the pace of learning is quicker thereby lifting standards. The curriculum is satisfactory. The morning focus groups help pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. There are insufficient opportunities, however, for them to practise and improve their basic skills across all subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not being used well enough to foster independent working and to encourage pupils to find out things for themselves.

Pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are good. Pupils are confident because they feel safe and secure in their school and they say that there is no bullying and that everyone gets on well together. They behave well and have a good understanding of how to be fit, and eat healthily and stay safe. Attendance rates have improved significantly over the last year and are now just below average. This testifies to the extent of pupils' enjoyment of their education and their desire to succeed. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities as mentors and buddies for the younger children and demonstrate their concern for others through fund-raising activities and charitable work. The good links with the local community ensure that pupils contribute well to the community particularly with the mosque and churches. Pupils' basic skills are below average but their positive attitudes to work and their good behaviour ensure that they are in a satisfactory position to make the most of the next stage of their education.

Governors and leaders responded well to the findings of the previous inspection and worked hard to implement the improvement plan. There is a sense of unity and common endeavour throughout the school and morale is good. There is now a realistic appraisal of where the school is and what it needs to do to move forward. Governance and leadership and management are therefore satisfactory. The school has a good capacity to improve because of what has been achieved over the last year.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Reception classes is good. Children settle quickly because of the good induction procedures and the supportive and welcoming atmosphere. Parents are

fully involved in their children's education and many participate in classroom activities, such as the creative learning sessions. Children start school with skills that are well below what is typical for their age. They make good progress but despite this, standards for most children are below those expected for their age by the start of Year 1. Achievement is good. Children who have little or no understanding of English when they join the school receive very good bi-lingual support and participate fully in class activities. They make similar progress to other children. Teaching and learning are good because interesting and challenging activities indoors and outside excite the children and encourage them to be adventurous and learn for themselves. Although the majority of children quickly grow in confidence, a small number of children at the end of the Reception year still find it difficult to join in with whole class activities. Good leadership and management mean that the Foundation Stage is well placed for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that challenging learning activities involve pupils actively and encourage them to talk much more often about their work.
- Provide opportunities in all subjects for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Use information and communication technology for pupils to improve the quality of their work, to find out things for themselves and to be more independent in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' skills at the beginning of Year 1 are below average. They make reasonable progress and their achievement by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, progress and achievement were satisfactory in Key Stage 1 but inadequate in Key Stage 2. Last year saw a marked improvement in the pace of the older pupils' learning and, although statutory targets were not met, results were higher in the 2007 Year 6 national tests than in previous years, particularly in English. The school's assessment records and the quality of work seen, confirm that such improvements are being maintained. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from Pakistani backgrounds and the small number of White British pupils are meeting their learning targets and are now making satisfactory progress. That is also the case for those pupils who join the school part way through a year. Pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy improve from the low level on entry and are below average by the time pupils leave the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave very well, work hard and are keen to learn. They are happy to come to school and feel safe and secure. Rates of attendance are just below the national average but the school is working hard to improve it. Regular rewards given to pupils with the best attendance motivate pupils to come to school. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social and moral development is particularly good and promoted well through the school's effective programme of personal, health and social education. Assemblies promote a good sense of community and pupils' relationships with one another and adults are good. The recently formed school council is active and makes a positive contribution to school life. For example, pupils are actively involved in designing an outside environmental area and in promoting a healthy snacks tuck

shop. The pupils are very clear about what contributes towards a healthy lifestyle. Many eat healthily and a good number enjoy taking part in the physical activities on offer. Pupils contribute to the community effectively through local and national charitable fund-raising. Although pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics are below average, they are satisfactorily prepared for future learning. Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities for tasks in class and around the school, particularly the older pupils in tasks such as acting as playground and reading buddies for younger children.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The underachievement seen in Years 3 to 6 at the time of the previous inspection was because of inadequacies in teaching. These weaknesses have been largely eliminated and teaching and learning are now satisfactory. This is because of improvements in assessing pupils' work and guiding them on how well they are doing and what they have to do to get better. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher and there is now a better balance between whole class work and group and individual activities. There are still some inadequacies where lessons centre too much on the teacher talking at length and pupils not being actively involved in learning. Opportunities are then missed to get pupils to discuss their work and so improve their speaking and listening skills. Although the school is now well resourced for information and communication technology, computers are not being used well enough to enable pupils to work on their own and to find out things for themselves. Insufficient attention is given to the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the teaching of other subjects. Teaching assistants are well deployed and are effective in helping pupils who struggle to learn, they also support more able pupils successfully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and national guidelines are followed. It is structured in such a way that all pupils have equal access to a wide range of learning opportunities. A concern is that not all the subjects of the curriculum are being fully used to provide pupils with opportunities to practise and improve basic skills. In contrast, good provision is made to address weaknesses in such skills through work in focus groups at the start of each day. Parents are appreciative of this innovation and say that their children often come home talking about what they have done in those sessions. Curriculum planning does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work with computers as a learning aid. Provision is made for pupils' personal development through a good personal, social and health education programme. Visitors to the school and a range of trips away effectively develop pupils' understanding of the wider world and the diversity of society. The extra-curricular activities, which take place before and after school and at lunchtimes, are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. There are effective procedures for keeping pupils safe. As a result there is always someone pupils can go to if they have problems or are upset. Pupils know they can make their concerns known; for example, there is a 'worry box' and they are

confident that these concerns will be taken seriously. Parents are pleased with the way in which their children are looked after and with the care they receive. Robust child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place. Bullying and racist incidents are rare and parents and children confirm this. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as a second language is good and well managed. A particular strength is the support given to vulnerable children through the work of all staff, including the learning mentor. Pupils' academic progress is now being tracked more carefully and satisfactory measures to help them improve their achievement have been introduced. They have learning targets that they use these to improve their work. The school works closely with parents and educational and health service staff to provide good quality support for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governors and leaders responded positively to the findings of the previous inspection and worked hard to remedy weaknesses. In this they have been largely successful. They have received good support from the Local Authority consultants and advisers. They have also made use of partnership arrangements with other schools to share good practice. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor and improve performance and better test results testify to the beginnings of success. Self-evaluation is now much better. It provides accurate and appropriate priorities for taking the school forward that are in the school's development plan. Realistic but challenging targets are being used to raise standards. As a result, governance and leadership and management at all levels are satisfactory. The capacity to improve further is good because of what has been achieved over the last year and because of the unity and determination of all who work in the school to increase the momentum of change. The headteacher and her senior colleagues and governors are now better informed about the school's performance and pupils' progress and achievement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Accrington Spring Hill Community Primary School

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you and only wished we had had more time to see all the interesting things you are doing. Many of you spoke about how much you enjoy your lessons and the breaks and lunch hour with friends. We were impressed by how hard you work and how you get on so well together. It was good to hear that there is no bullying and that you care for each other. Please thank your parents for sending in the questionnaire returns. Their comments have been helpful.

The quality of the education you receive is satisfactory. You make satisfactory progress as you move through the school and you are successful in overcoming most of the learning difficulties you had as very young children. Standards are improving and there are good systems in place for assessing your work, helping you if there are problems and letting you know what you have to do to get better. You say that you enjoy your work and that your teachers and the assistants are kind and spend lots of time with you if you have worries.

You told us that you particularly like lessons where you have to do practical things and are asked to solve problems for yourselves. Your school is going to look at ways to do more of this sort of work and to give you more time to use computers so that you can be independent in the way you learn. Most of you are making satisfactory progress in your reading and writing and in your mathematics. One way to improve standards in these skills is to practise them frequently in all your subjects. You will have more opportunities to do so in the future.

We valued our time with you and we wish you every success in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead inspector