

Queen's Park CofE URC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130382
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	315627
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Dee Brigstock

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roy Quinn
Headteacher	Mr David Thorpe
Date of previous school inspection	7 April 2003
School address	Rivington Road St Helens Merseyside WA10 4NQ
Telephone number	01744 29354
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues in depth: achievement and standards; the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; pupils' behaviour; and attendance. Evidence was gathered from visiting lessons, discussions with pupils, looking at pupils' work and analysing individual education plans. In addition, the school's tracking system was used to assess pupils' current progress and school documents and parental questionnaires were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Queen's Park C of E URC Primary School is a large school serving an area of social disadvantage. It came about through the amalgamation of two other schools in 1995. In September 2006 children from another school that closed down started at Queen's Park. The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds but a handful of pupils are at an early stage of learning English, their main home languages being Polish and Italian. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There are a few pupils who are looked after by the local authority. The school has gained several awards including the National Healthy Schools' award, Activemark Gold and the Basic Skills 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

This is a good school where pupils flourish and become mature, responsible members of the local and wider community. The excellent leadership of the headteacher successfully enthuses staff to develop pupils' full potential within a calm, Christian ethos. Pupils say, 'We work hard, but there's always room for improvement.' Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One comment, which captures the views of many was, 'Good kids, good teaching staff, good school. What more could a parent ask for?' Regular and effective communication between home and school and appropriate homework involves parents very well in their children's education.

Almost all pupils achieve well throughout the school. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and outstanding progress in Key Stage 2. Some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory rather than good progress because the targets on their individual education plans are not precise enough for them to achieve and their learning slows. These targets are not reflected well enough in teachers' lesson plans.

Standards by Year 6 are well above average and have been so for several years. Targets for 2008 are higher than in previous years and assessment documentation and pupils' current work clearly show that pupils, particularly the most able, are on track to meet these challenging targets in English, mathematics and science. The outstanding progress in Key Stage 2 is due to some inspirational teaching, particularly in Year 6. Standards by Year 2 are average. This represents good progress in Key Stage 1 because standards on entry to school are well below average for the majority of children.

Pupils are very happy in school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, enhanced by an interesting, well-planned curriculum and a sense of awe and wonder in lessons, generated by talented teachers. A typical comment made by parents was, 'Children learn true values.' Pupils clearly show respect for each other, their behaviour is excellent and older pupils report that rare instances of bullying are dealt with very effectively. They say that they feel very safe and well cared for. Older pupils also willingly team up with the youngest children as 'buddies' at lunchtime to help care for them. Pupils know how important exercise and sensible eating habits are for them to stay fit and healthy and have plenty of opportunities to take part in an outstanding range of extra-curricular clubs with a sporting theme. The school has excellent links within the local community, particularly with local churches. This good personal development prepares pupils very well for the future. However, the school's attendance figures have been below average for several years. The headteacher, education welfare officer and additional clerical support work hard to encourage pupils to attend but a very few families persist in not sending their children to school regularly enough. Although early in the academic year, the school is on track to meet its agreed attendance target. All safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Pupils are confident that accidents are dealt with well by staff trained in first aid and that their teachers or the headteacher will listen to their concerns.

The headteacher fully supports teachers in their collaboration with staff from other schools to share good practice and to explore new ways for pupils to learn. In addition, staff share their learning with each other after attending courses. As a result, teachers use each other's flair, gifts of imagination and newly acquired knowledge to plan motivational lessons which accelerate pupils' learning. For example, in Year 2, teachers provide photographs which could illustrate different parts of a story. These provoke discussion between pupils and provide them with a

framework for their writing. Planned learning activities meet the needs of most pupils very well and all teachers assess pupils' learning accurately when they mark their work. Some teachers' marking clearly points out to pupils what they have to do next to improve further. It is in these classes that the most progress is made. In Years 1 and 2 teachers also mark work carefully, but do not point out how pupils can improve further. This, combined with the lack of precise targets for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and teachers' use of them, is why progress in Years 1 and 2 is not as rapid as it is in Years 3 to 6.

The curriculum is varied and interesting and the quality of physical education (PE) is outstanding. Pupils talk excitedly about the trips and visits they make and visitors they have which enhance their learning. For example, they are excited about working with an artist in residence to paint a 'history time tunnel' along a corridor. The curriculum is not modified well enough for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make the same good progress as their peers.

Staff, pupils, governors and parents are aware of the headteacher's vision for the school's future. Experienced and knowledgeable governors are well informed about the strengths of the school and how it could improve even further. They take an active role in challenging and supporting the headteacher. Staff professional development is good. Resources, including finances, are carefully managed and the school provides good value for money. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Taking into account the school's maintenance of well above average standards and leaders' willingness to embrace new ideas, the school's capacity to improve further is also good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are well provided for in the Reception class. They enter school with skills that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language, as many of them lack any Nursery school experience. They make good progress because they are excited to learn through stimulating, imaginative themes. These are planned well by the leader of the Foundation Stage in a good partnership with other staff. For example, during the inspection children were entranced by learning in the gloom, lit only by fairy lights, about light and dark. They could barely wait to start their learning activities. By the time they enter Year 1, almost all are working securely within the expectations of the six areas of learning. Their recognition and knowledge of sounds and letters are well above average because of the excellent work they do in learning letter sounds. This learning provides a very solid base on which to build in Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the targets for all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are precise and measurable.
- Ensure that teachers inform pupils in Key Stage 1 on how they can improve their work further.

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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?	1
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	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	1
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	3
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 giving me such a warm and cheerful welcome when I visited your school recently. You were really easy to talk to and I appreciated how well you made sure I did not get lost! You were all very keen to tell me what a happy school this is and how hard you work and play. I agree that you go to a good school, have a good education and that you do really well in your lessons, especially in English, mathematics, science and PE. A lot of parents wrote to say how well you are looked after and taught and I agree with them. I was delighted to be in the Reception classes when they were learning about dark and light. The fairy lights were on and I didn't want to leave!

One reason why you do so well is that you have really good attitudes towards learning new things and you behave brilliantly. Also, your teachers keep trying out new ideas to help you learn - like the 'snowballs'. Your headteacher and all the staff have good ideas on how to improve the school even further. I have asked them to do two more things. First to make sure that those of you who don't find learning easy have simpler targets, so that you know how quickly you are learning new skills. Second, I have asked the teachers in Years 1 and 2 to tell the pupils in their classes how to improve further when they mark their work.

You have all my best wishes for the future and I sincerely hope you stay as fit and healthy as you are now.