

Greengates Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131061
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	315704
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Fitzgibbon
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Johnston
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leathers Lane Halewood Knowsley Merseyside L26 1XQ
Telephone number	0151 2888900
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school was formed in September 2006 from the amalgamation of two local schools. It is of average size and the vast majority of its pupils are of White British heritage. Nearly half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. Most of these pupils have difficulties with speech, language and communication.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This new school is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has good systems for pupils' care, guidance and support and this leads to their personal development being good. For example, pupils talk positively about making new friends and they know how to stay active and healthy. Strong leadership from the headteacher and governing body, and effective management, have quickly established a firm base from which the school can move forward. This quality of leadership and management has maintained the strengths of both schools and quickly established plans, which are beginning to bear fruit, to carry the new school forward. The capacity to improve even further is good.

Parents are very pleased with the school and the rapid progress it has made. Pupils too are proud of their new school. For example, many pupils are excited that their school achieved second place in a local swimming gala recently. The curriculum adequately meets the needs of the pupils. Additional activities like music, modern foreign languages and educational visits are of good quality and promote pupils' enjoyment of school. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and staff plan lessons thoroughly.

Children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are well below age-related expectations. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are below average. Pupils' achievement, however, is satisfactory, given their various starting points at this new school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because programmes of work and teaching are so closely geared to their needs. However, many other pupils lack the quality vocabulary or the ideas to write creatively because their experience through first-hand experience and books is not broad enough. Moreover, work set for the more able mathematicians too often involves more questions than tasks which encourage them to use their thinking skills.

Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage enables pupils to make steady progress and they join Year 1 with standards which are below national expectations. Sound teaching in Key Stage 1 helps most pupils reach the expected standard for their age, but very few go on to reach the higher standard because teaching does not extend the pupils' understanding well enough, especially in mathematics.

Senior managers accurately assess the current position of the school and use this information well to plan for the future. The main priority is to raise standards in English and mathematics and these plans are already having an impact because most pupils began to progress more quickly during the autumn term. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall; children get off to a good start in the Nursery. Parents say, with justification, that their children eagerly anticipate the exciting activities on offer each day in the Nursery. The classroom and outside area are well planned to be both stimulating and inviting for children and are used well to promote learning. Activities are especially effective in helping children gain the independence and social skills they need in school. Language skills, from their low starting point, are developed well. Progress slows in the Reception class, where children's sometimes challenging behaviour is not always effectively managed. Good support from the Foundation Stage manager has improved the environment here and the quality of planning so that children are learning but the pace is, as yet, slower

than in the Nursery class. Teacher assessments are exceptionally good in the Nursery and used effectively to plan the next stage in children's learning, but this is not done with sufficient regularity or thoroughness in the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Broaden pupils' experiences of books and the wider world so that their enriched vocabulary and ideas enable them to improve the quality of their writing.
- Provide activities which challenge the mathematical thinking of the more able pupils.
- Improve assessment procedures and the use of the information gathered to plan the next stage in children's learning in the Reception class.

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

On entry to Year 1, pupils' language skills are below average with particular weaknesses in their letter sounds and writing skills. Staff are successful in raising their reading and writing skills to average levels by using an effective programme to teach letter sounds. However, tasks rarely extend the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics. Current standards of reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 are below average but this represents satisfactory progress from these pupils' various starting points. In Key Stage 2, pupils again make satisfactory progress overall and their rate of progress is improving all the time. Teaching is becoming more effective and senior managers use target-setting well. Nevertheless, standards in English, mathematics and science are below average. They are especially weak in writing, which pupils find hard because they have narrow vocabularies and few ideas. Too few pupils are above average in mathematics partly because tasks are repetitive and do not test the thinking of the most able. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in most classes, with teaching assistants providing effective support during group work. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy school, work together quite well and have formed positive relationships with adults. They say that they quickly became friends with each other after the amalgamation. They are delighted that adults value their work and are proud to receive recognition at celebration assemblies for improved work, behaviour or attitudes. They raise money for charities and are very keen to support the Starfish project, which provides crèche facilities in Africa. These examples demonstrate that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Most of them are orderly and keen to learn but a few chat during lessons and are sometimes inattentive. The steady progress they make in English and mathematics and their good social skills are a satisfactory grounding for the next stage of their education. Pupils know about hand washing and healthy eating and the bright displays concerning 'good' foods and cleanliness in the dining hall are a constant reminder of them. Pupils' attendance, which is generally broadly average, was below average at the time of the inspection owing to a recent spate of illness in all classes. Also, the school has identified those pupils with very poor attendance and is making every effort to get them to school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory because there are some inconsistencies between classes. It is better in the older junior classes and in the Nursery class. Teachers' planning is good and generally takes account of what pupils have already learned. The management of lessons, however, is not always consistent enough. For example, the teachers do not always share what will be learned in the lesson with the pupils. Consequently, pupils do not always focus on the lesson well and cannot easily review their learning at the end of the session. Teachers mostly manage pupils' behaviour well mixing praise and reward with appropriate sanction when necessary. The deployment of teaching assistants is good during group work but their impact on learning is less effective when the teacher is talking to the class. Teachers' marking is very helpful to the pupils in most classes, telling them what they have done well and how they might improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's programme for English and mathematics adequately develops pupils' skills. The emphasis on systematically teaching letter sounds in Key Stage 1 is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to read and to spell. Other subjects are taught through the recently introduced International Primary Curriculum. This new approach is exciting pupils and giving them more opportunities to discuss but it is too early to evaluate its overall impact on their learning. The school makes good use of specialist teaching in music. Pupils like to sing and many of them learn to play an instrument. A modern foreign language is also taught. The school offers a good range of educational visits to places of interest. For example, pupils were enthralled when acting out a period of history during their visit to Speke Hall. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good 'golden time' carousel of activities offered to them every Friday afternoon as a reward for good behaviour.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents report that their children are happy to come to school and feel safe there. These comments support the inspection's view that the school looks after its pupils well. For example, attendance is checked regularly and appropriate action is taken to encourage improvements, and a good rewards structure, including the very popular 'golden time', are improving pupils' behaviour. Good quality information gives parents a clear picture of their children's progress and how they can support their learning at home. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet government requirements. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are kept fully informed of their children's additional support. The school makes good use of support agencies to help these pupils. The effective partnership with all parents and the excellent links with other schools have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. The system of target-setting is established and, coupled with generally good marking by teachers, helps pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, with the very active support of the governing body and the deputy headteacher, has managed the amalgamation of the two schools very well. The new school functions as one institution with common policies. Provision is improving well. Good systems designed to improve pupils' progress are in place. These are used well by most teachers. However, the school has identified that higher attainers and children in Reception could benefit from a better application of these methods. Plans have been implemented to tackle these relative weaknesses, but it is too early to see much impact from them. Senior managers have a clear picture of the quality of teaching and have made effective use of this information to help improve the confidence and skills of colleagues through advice and training. Governance is good. The governing body maintains an efficient overview of spending and has a good picture of where the school is now and how governors intend to develop the school. They have been especially effective in negotiating improvements in accommodation with the local authority.

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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	NA
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	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	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	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	3
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?	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	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	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**

My colleague and I enjoyed our recent visit to your school and we thank you for making us welcome. Your views were important to us and we listened carefully to what you had to say about your new school. We agree with your headteacher and the governors that your school gives you a satisfactory education. We too feel that it is improving rapidly. You spoke highly of your headteacher and we agree that she has done a wonderful job of bringing together two schools into one. You currently make satisfactory progress in your learning because sound teaching helps you improve in English, mathematics and science. Your personal development is good. For example, you help others know how to stay safe and keep yourselves fit by doing lots of physical activities and eating well. It is good that so many of you know and work hard to reach your targets - well done.

In this report, your headteacher has been asked to do three things which will make the school a better place for you.

- Encourage you to read widely and learn about the world so that you have more to write about.
- Give you activities in mathematics which promote your thinking, particularly for those who can manage harder challenges.
- Improve testing procedures in the Reception class so that children there make quicker progress.

You can help your school to be a better place by attending regularly, by being on your best behaviour at all times and by continuing to work hard in all lessons. Once again, many thanks for your help in our inspection - my colleague and I enjoyed our time in your school.