

Northwick Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131346
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	315785
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	543
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Culloty
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Lane
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Third Avenue Canvey Island Essex SS8 9SU
Telephone number	01268 684554
Fax number	01268 510783

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2006 as an amalgamation of the infant and junior schools on the site. It is a large school and it is set in an area of social disadvantage. Almost all pupils come from White British families with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. When children enter the Nursery, their attainment is well below expectations, particularly in language and social skills. The proportion taking a free school meal is very high as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need. A significant number of pupils arrive or leave the school other than at the usual times. The school provides breakfast clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs and full day care for 2-4 year olds. The headteacher was previously headteacher of the infant school.

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. Since its amalgamation, it has made great strides in developing what it offers to its pupils. Parents are extremely positive about it. One wrote 'I feel lucky that my children are able to attend such a happy and well managed school.' The pupils agree saying, 'The teachers are brilliant and we do lots of sport.'

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, reflecting the caring ethos of the school. Pupils are polite and friendly and behave well. The school has worked hard to promote good behaviour successfully but now that this is firmly established, there is scope for the older pupils to develop their independence skills further. Pupils receive outstanding pastoral support so that they become confident and take on a range of responsibilities. The outstanding emphasis on healthy lifestyles means that pupils know the importance of physical exercise and a healthy diet. They make an excellent contribution to the community, raising funds for a range of charities. The orchestra and choir accompany other schools in the area. Attendance is below average, mainly due to a small number of families taking their children on holiday in term time, despite the school's best efforts to dissuade them. There is an excellent partnership with local schools and outside agencies, which contributes positively to standards. The curriculum is good. A wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, that give pupils experiences that they might not otherwise have, enriches it. There is a strong emphasis on music, physical education and art.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. Standards are improving. In 2007, standards were broadly average in Year 2 and these pupils achieved well. Standards were below average in English and science and average in mathematics for pupils in Year 6. Standards in writing and science have lagged behind those in reading. Inspection evidence shows that standards and achievement are rising throughout Key Stage 2.

There are several reasons why pupils are doing so much better. The teaching staff is highly qualified and school leaders have ensured that all pupils receive good teaching. Work is well matched to the needs of all pupils and expectations are high. Pupils are managed well and lessons run briskly. Support staff make a significant contribution to the rising standards, giving effective help, particularly to small groups, including those with learning difficulties. The talented headteacher provides a very clear vision and direction. She has the confidence of staff and parents. One teacher commented 'It's a good place to be'. She is skilled in accessing extra funding to take the school forward and enhance learning. There is a strong sense of teamwork and the staff have worked hard to meld into a cohesive team for the benefit of all pupils. Good leadership and management, where standards and progress are thoroughly monitored, results in improvements in many areas of the school since its amalgamation and leads to a good capacity for continued improvement. Although standards in writing and science are rising, the school has recognised that they are not yet high enough and measures are planned to address this. The governors are also valued members of the team and are led by an extremely knowledgeable and active chair. The school's self-evaluation is accurate.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many parents praised the start their children receive. One wrote, 'My daughter enjoys nursery so much that she wants to go at weekends!' The good curriculum contributes positively to the good start the children make. The high quality of the teaching in both in the Nursery and the Reception classes ensures that exciting activities are closely matched to children's needs. Adults pay strong attention to developing children's basic skills. For example, children in both Reception classes are divided into small groups so they can learn the sounds they need in a fun way. Good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that activities cover all the areas of learning and no opportunity is missed to develop social and language skills. Children enjoy school and settle quickly. Their behaviour is good. Children's skills on entry are well below those expected for their age. They progress well, although by the end of the Foundation Stage, few children reach the expected levels in any of the areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the planned initiatives to raise standards and improve achievement for the older pupils, particularly in writing and in investigative science.
- Give older pupils more opportunities to develop their independence skills to prepare them better for the next stage in their education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well. In 2007, standards were broadly average overall by the end of Year 2. The proportion reaching the higher Level 3 was above average in reading and mathematics. Fewer than average pupils reached this level in writing. Standards were below average in English and science and average in mathematics by the end of Year 6. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was below average in all three subjects. Standards seen during the inspection show that they are rising throughout Key Stage 2 and are on course to be a little better this year in Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes to their work and are keen to do their best. They contribute to the community through many fund-raising and charitable activities. The school council takes their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils choose healthy meals at lunchtime and benefit particularly from the excellent sporting opportunities provided. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall but, although the school makes efforts to promote multi-cultural understanding, it is not clear from pupils that this is deeply understood.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They see the school as 'brilliant' and praise their teachers. Pupils' development of workplace and other skills is satisfactory because literacy and numeracy attainment is as yet average, with a need to improve independence skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned in detail and well managed. Teachers use suitable resources effectively to engage and stimulate the pupils. Many teachers use questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding and promote good learning. Support staff are often used well to help individuals, lead learning in small groups or to make assessments of pupils' work, but they are not always used as well when teachers lead work for the whole class. Teaching projects an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils become deeply involved in lessons such as responding to poetry or understanding and solving numerical problems. In many lessons, pupils share their growing enjoyment and begin to learn from each other. Increasingly, pupils are encouraged to continue their learning in a homework club or out of school. One pupil commented, 'it's helped us to think'. Thorough assessment gauges pupils' progress and identifies targets for improvement. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and provide comment that is both encouraging and helpful, although this is not yet consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Daily routines, such as teaching pupils in 'sets' according to their level of attainment, are well planned to focus work to pupils' needs. The school is a stimulating and productive place in which to learn. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy and increasingly good use is made of information and communication technology. An emphasis on art, music and physical education contributes strongly to learning, especially to build the confidence of those who have weak basic skills. Provision for personal, social and health education effectively promotes pupils' personal development. There is a good range of clubs and activities before, during and after school, including opportunities for many to contribute to the school and wider community. Visitors are used well to bring history alive and to build understanding of the local and wider community. Visits to places of interest and a residential visit for older pupils do much to broaden their horizons and support their personal development. The good curriculum meets statutory requirements and meets many of the pupils' needs but does not fully promote scientific investigation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents remark that the teachers are 'fantastic'. 'I am so pleased with the school' typifies many of the written comments. Pastoral care is outstanding with very strong links to outside agencies to safeguard and protect pupils at risk of harm. Vulnerable children are closely monitored. Procedures for safeguarding children are rigorous and child protection procedures are in place. Excellent management of the premises ensures that the school is clean, safe and healthy.

Staff know their pupils very well and act immediately when individuals need help. They are totally committed to the care of each pupil. This is a school where every child really does matter. Pupils trust their teachers, and willingly ask for help, because they know that staff value their views and ideas. The school has a clear behaviour policy which pupils understand and abide by. Although academic guidance is good and the school tracks pupils' progress effectively, the

tracking system is cumbersome. Consequently, it is not sufficiently sharply focused to provide a clear whole school overview.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteachers show a strong commitment to the development of the school, working towards consistent practices in the merging of the two schools. In the early stage of this new school, they have secured good quality staff and have identified areas where it needs to improve. For example, plans are already in place to raise standards in writing and science. Subject teams fulfil their roles well. They have a good understanding of areas for development in their subjects. Challenging targets are used effectively to raise standards. Governance is good. The governors pose challenging questions, fulfilling their role as 'critical friends' effectively. They know that pupils need as much adult support as possible and have funded for this to provide good opportunities for learning. The headteacher and governors have good systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying the next steps. However, the school improvement plan, while covering many important areas to take the school forward does not yet include longer-term initiatives.

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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	NA
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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Northwick Park Primary School, Canvey Island, SS8 9SU

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we found out.

You told us that you go to a good school and that the grown-ups look after you extremely well and help you learn well. We agree with you. We thought that you behave well and take good care of each other. Your knowledge about how to keep healthy and safe by eating the right foods and doing lots of sport is excellent. We were impressed by the way that the orchestra and chamber choir help other schools to enjoy their carol concerts. You have lots of interesting things to do, both in lessons and in the other activities that you can take part in. The teachers and governors who lead your school have worked very hard to help your old schools join together successfully. Your families know that you go to a good school where you make good progress.

We have asked the headteacher and the teachers to help you do as well in writing and science experiments as you do in reading and mathematics, particularly the older pupils. You can help by continuing to do your best. We have also asked if the older children could work more by themselves so that they will be used to being more independent when they go to secondary school.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at Northwick Park Primary School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector