

Underwood West Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133271
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	316053
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Geoff Lawrence

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	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Henderson
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Tomlinson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Newcastle Street Crewe Cheshire CW1 3LF
Telephone number	01270 685720
Fax number	01270 256936

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2008
Inspection number	316053

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school opened in January 2007. It is situated in an urban area characterised by considerable social and economic disadvantage. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school holds the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards reached and progress made by pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. However, because of low standards and inadequate progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, inspectors judge its effectiveness to be inadequate. As a result, the school provides inadequate value for money.

When the school opened, the headteacher acted swiftly to unite the new staff and establish a school-wide commitment to improvement. Good use of self-evaluation enables the school to identify key areas for improvement. As a result, firm action to improve teaching and pupils' behaviour is beginning to improve pupils' progress, but that rate of progress is not yet sufficient or consistent across all classes to resolve the legacy of significant underachievement.

The school has a number of strengths, principally in the good provision in the Reception unit and Year 6, but these strengths are not yet replicated in other year groups. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall: there has not been enough time for the improvements in teaching to have a full impact on standards that are exceptionally low or achievement that is inadequate. Inconsistencies in teaching remain across Years 1 to 6 leading to pupils making progress at different rates. This is because some teachers are not making the best use of the information available to them about pupils' abilities or how they learn. Consequently, pupils are not always given work at the right level or that stimulates their interest.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of relevant experiences for pupils with a strong emphasis on English, mathematics and personal development. In Key Stage 1 however, the curriculum does not link closely enough with that of the Foundation Stage to ensure that there are appropriate learning opportunities and activities for those pupils in Year 1 who are working below the national expectations for their age. This hinders their progress. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is successful in enabling them to make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. Pupils' attendance has improved significantly in the last year in response to the extensive and successful range of measures employed by the school. Pupils say they feel safe and like school. They behave well and move around in corridors and between classes sensibly. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and many take part in the sporting activities on offer, which reflects the achievement of the Healthy School Award.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has provided strong leadership in bringing about improvements in this new school. The able leadership team and very effective governing body provide good support. However, middle leaders are not consistent in their understanding of data and in their use of it to promote achievement. Nevertheless, a number of important actions have led to improvements in a short period of time. This, coupled with the support the school receives from the local authority, indicates that the school has the necessary capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children currently in the Foundation Stage entered Reception with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age in all areas. They achieve well yet by the end of Reception do not attain the levels typical for their ages. A high priority is given to personal development and, as a result, children settle quickly, enjoy coming to school and behave well. Good teaching helps children develop positive attitudes towards learning such as working cooperatively in small groups. Children are well cared for and are helped to learn good basic personal hygiene and how to stay healthy. For example, they understand the need to protect their skin from the sun by wearing sun hats when playing outside. The Foundation Stage is well led. Assessment is effective and the careful planning of creative and interesting activities takes account of children's individual needs. However, some activities do not promote children's independent learning skills sufficiently. This is because these activities are too adult-directed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6.
- Ensure that all teachers use rigorous assessment accurately to plan work which meets the needs and interests of all pupils.
- Ensure that the curriculum in Key Stage 1 meets the needs of all learners, in particular those in Year 1 who have yet to attain the national expectations for their age.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels use data accurately to promote higher standards and improve progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The limited amount of historical data available indicates that standards are below those expected for pupils at the end of Year 2 and exceptionally low by the end of Year 6. Achievement is inadequate reflecting a legacy of underperformance.

Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that, in spite of recent improvements in teaching, this is still the case. The school has accurately assessed pupils' standards and achievement through its new monitoring system. In spite of some excellent teaching in Year 6, there remains much to do in this year group to ensure that pupils' skills are as good as they should be by the end of Year 6. The impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching is becoming evident throughout the school. Pupils' achievement is improving, but remains inadequate overall because the improvements have not had sufficient time to impact on standards. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, looked-after children and those who are vulnerable achieve satisfactorily. Strategies to support these pupils are successful, with activities suitably matched to their abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school. They say they like it because teachers are kind and everyone gets on very well together. They report that the few incidents of bullying that occur are quickly dealt with. The majority of pupils behave well and any inappropriate behaviour by a minority

is very well managed by staff. Pupils say that the improvements in behaviour have been because they are now encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. They feel safe because there are many adults in the school who are always ready to help them. Although attendance is low, it has improved significantly over the last year due to the extensive range of strategies in place and the effective support given to families by the learning mentors. Pupils are very aware of healthy lifestyles and they understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is inadequate reflecting the low standards attained in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some outstanding practice in Year 6, where the lessons engage and motivate pupils and consequently help them to make rapid progress. This is because, in Year 6, assessment is used very well to match tasks to pupils' needs and to set work that is interesting and challenging. This practice, however, has not yet extended to all other year groups. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and this contributes greatly to their good behaviour. The deployment of teaching assistants is satisfactory and starting to contribute to improving access to learning for those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who suffer from emotional and behavioural problems. Teachers are increasingly using a range of strategies to involve pupils in their own learning but this is not consistent across all classes and has not yet eradicated the legacy of underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The highest priority is given to mathematics and English and the school works closely with the local authority to improve provision in these subjects. The increased focus on teaching letter sounds across the school has already had some positive impact on standards in reading. Links between subjects are developing in order to create topics and themes which will not only interest and motivate pupils, but also provide them with greater opportunities to practise their basic skills through other subjects. This initiative has yet to impact on standards and achievement. The curriculum in Key Stage 1 is not fully meeting the developmental needs of some of the pupils, particularly the lower attainers in Year 1. This results in narrow learning opportunities for these pupils. A sound range of extra-curricular activities is complemented by a variety of visits and visitors. Support for vulnerable pupils to develop improved confidence and self-esteem contributes well to improving their readiness to learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is effective and support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is planned carefully. Parents feel that the school looks after their children well. The school has good links with external support agencies and considerable effort is made to support pupils with low self-confidence and those experiencing stress. The school identifies pupils' additional needs promptly and carefully records and checks the effectiveness of extra help given. The school has introduced new arrangements for marking in order to give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. This has not yet been fully applied in all classes

although in some year groups, notably in Year 6, effective marking is impacting well on pupils' awareness of their own progress. The school is developing an improving range of additional teaching to address pupils' underachievement. This has yet to impact on standards and achievement. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and safeguarding are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of education. The school's plans for improvement provide a clear way forward and include challenging targets which are tied closely to performance management. Teaching and learning is monitored regularly and clear feedback is given to staff. Teachers are responding well to the changes that are being made. Assessment procedures are fully in place, but it is too soon for the production of useful data against which to measure progress. As a result, the school does not yet have a clear picture of the full impact of the improvements being made. Subject leadership is inconsistent and, as a result, middle management is not yet fully effective in understanding performance data and how it relates to school improvement. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well because they are kept well informed and have a high level of involvement. As a result, they perform their duties well.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	3

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	4
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?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Underwood West Primary School, Crewe, CW1 3LF

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspectors. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and you gave us a lot of valuable information. This was a great help to us. Those of you in the Reception unit are doing well, but the school has yet to help all of you make faster progress and attain high standards. Therefore, your school is not doing as well as it should and we have given it a notice to make some important improvements. Inspectors will visit the school soon to see if things are getting better.

These are some of the things we judged to be good about your school.

- The adults in your school successfully encourage you to show care and respect for others and to get on well together.
- Everyone works hard to make your school a safe and happy place.
- You behave well.
- You have a good understanding about how to stay healthy.

To make your school better we have asked your headteacher and others to:

- help all the children in Years 1 to 6 do better in English, mathematics and science, so that you all become as good as you can in these very important subjects
- look closely at how well you are doing and make sure that the work given to you is interesting and not too easy or too difficult
- make sure that the children in Years 1 and 2 get the chance to learn in a way that is best for them
- make sure that all teachers use the information available about how well you are doing to help you do even better.

We are confident that your headteacher and teachers can do these very important things. You can help them by continuing to work hard and doing your best and by making sure that you attend school regularly.

Thank you once again for helping us.