

Monksdown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133331
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	316088
Inspection date	2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon W Todd
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Monksdown Road Liverpool L11 1HH
Telephone number	0151 2261606
Fax number	0151 2566281

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement mainly in writing, teachers' use of assessment in setting challenging tasks well matched to pupils' different learning needs and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to make further improvements. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. 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

The school is larger than average in size. Extensive house clearance in the locality has resulted in a fall in pupil numbers, although many parents continue to bring their children from further afield because of the school's popularity. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high, indicating the high degree of social disadvantage in the area served by the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are of Polish, African or Chinese backgrounds of which a very small number speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Monksdown Primary is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. The school is justifiably held in high regard in the local authority. Parents wholeheartedly appreciate the care and devotion shown by staff. They are right to do so, because the school provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support and a safe haven for pupils living in a neighbourhood affected by deprivation and crime. School personnel, with support from outside agencies, do all they can to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable pupils and work tirelessly to remove any barriers to learning. Pupils' self-esteem and learning is guided sensitively, paving the way towards their high achievement and excellent personal development.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They strongly resist any form of bullying or racism and show much concern for others, for example as playground buddies and school council members. This accounts for the harmonious atmosphere in school. Pupils are acutely aware of benefits of good diet and exercise and of the importance of avoiding dangers such as drugs, smoking and alcohol. Suggestion boxes and pupil questionnaires ensure that pupils' views have a bearing on school life. Although pupils have only limited awareness of other cultures, their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils take immense pride in their school and are very enthusiastic learners. They say this is because, 'The staff are great and lessons are fun.' Attendance is improving and close to the national average, despite the persistent absences of a small number of pupils. In acquiring secure literacy, numeracy and study skills, pupils are well prepared for the future.

Pupils' achievement is exceptionally good. Their standards on starting Year 1 are well below average but improve significantly because of excellent teaching. By the end of Year 2, standards are still below average but rising. Pupils' achievement from Years 3 to 6 is consistently within the top 15% nationally and reached the top 5% in 2006. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science and are continuing to rise because the school sets very challenging targets, which pupils reach. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from skilled teaching, which helps them to make exceptionally good progress. Specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language greatly improves their command of English. Able and gifted pupils also progress rapidly in response to teachers' high expectations.

Teaching is outstanding. The way pupils are managed and encouraged is of the highest calibre and, consequently, they give of their best. Teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them, how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve. Their understanding is carefully checked and extended through shrewd questioning, enabling them to become confident learners. Lessons are challenging and move along swiftly. Pupils are swept along. The work provided and the targets set are tailored carefully to match pupils' different learning needs. Concentration and interest levels are high. This accelerates learning and promotes high achievement.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning and their achievement are positively influenced by a stimulating curriculum, sensitively adapted to meet the particular needs of pupils in the school. For example, the very effective health education programme, residential visits and excellent range of additional activities provide unique opportunities for pupils to experience the wider world, develop their talents and appreciate safe and healthy lifestyles. The school is a centre of excellence for teaching French. The impressive trophy cabinet and certificates awarded illustrate pupils' many achievements in sport, art and music.

The headteacher and two deputy headteachers provide outstanding leadership and management, leaving no stone unturned in their pursuit of excellence. Senior staff check the work of the school by observing lessons and analysing pupils' progress and this provides a wealth of information, enabling governors to provide good support. Areas for improvement, such as former weaknesses in pupils' writing and low standards in Key Stage 1, are clearly identified and very successfully improved. The only disadvantage in focusing all of the staff's attention on one particular issue is that subject leaders do not have regular opportunities to check teaching across the school. This makes it harder for them to ensure that their recommendations are taking root, although they do check pupils' work and assessments. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was judged very good. Since then standards have risen further, yet there is no hint of complacency. This is why the school judged most areas of its work to be good, when, in fact, they are outstanding. Pupils say the school is 'near perfect' but in the view of school leaders, 'There is always more to do.' This fuels the school's drive and excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of education provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The vast majority of children enter Nursery with very low starting points, particularly in aspects of personal development and spoken language. Many children are initially unable to communicate other than using single words or gestures. In Nursery, children are skilfully taught to cooperate with others and listen carefully to adults. As a result, they settle quickly into school routines and behave remarkably well. In Nursery and Reception, children's natural curiosity is stimulated by the provision of a good range of new and novel experiences, such as making their own healthy fruit salad. A good balance is maintained between teaching children new skills, such as blending letter sounds, and encouraging them to explore and learn independently. Regular assessments of their progress are carried out. However, staff have been frustrated by not being able to measure how well children are progressing in relation to children in other schools. To this end, the school has recently introduced a means of assessing children's skills and progress through Nursery and Reception, although it is still at an early stage of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of assessment data to measure, compare and increase children's progress in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that all subject leaders check the impact their recommendations are having on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
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	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Inspection of Monksdown Primary School, Liverpool, L11 1HH

Thank you for your warm welcome and politeness in answering all my questions. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and would like to share my findings with you.

You told me that your school was near perfect. After spending a day with you I agree that it is outstanding in almost every way. When I asked you what you liked best, you said the staff. Right again! The headteacher and deputy headteachers are excellent leaders who do everything they can to make your time in school enjoyable, happy and worthwhile. Teachers and support assistants work extremely hard to make your lessons interesting and provide work at just the right level to help you learn successfully. This is why your achievement is exceptionally good and the standards you reach are at the levels expected by the time you are ready to move on to high school.

As well as providing a first class education for you, all adults within your school do their very best to keep you safe and help you to understand why it is important to be healthy and hardworking. In the entrance hall, the big S-H-A-P-E display showing you how to be Safe, Healthy, Achieve, be Positive and improve your future Economic well-being, is rather like a school motto that you live by. Watching you in lessons and in the playground, I can see that you have got the message. Your behaviour and the care you show for others and your school is excellent.

Your school is very successful. I can only offer two small recommendations to make it even better.

- I have asked the headteacher and staff to further improve the way they assess and measure children's progress in Nursery and Reception.
- I have also asked teachers in charge of the main subjects to visit different lessons to check how well their suggestions to improve your learning are being put into practice.