

Seven Stars Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119285
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	318498
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Garry Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	153
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Rymer
Headteacher	Ms Lynsey Houstoun
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2006
School address	Peacock Hall Road Leyland Lancashire PR25 1TD
Telephone number	01772 422503
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

When Seven Stars Primary school was inspected in September 2006, it was judged to require special measures. It is a smaller than average school. The large majority of pupils are of White British origin and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. It serves an area with pockets of significant social and economic deprivation as is reflected in the very high proportion of pupils that are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that found nationally as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has acquired Investors in People status, the Healthy Eating quality mark and the Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school now provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education.

Pupils enter the school with skills that are well below those that are typically of their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, but enter Key Stage 1 with standards that are below national expectations. Overall, progress is satisfactory across Key Stages 1 and 2, but progress varies between different subjects and year groups. Progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics; however, the school has put in place robust initiatives that are beginning to address this. Standards in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved over the last three years and are now close to the national average. In these tests in 2007 results showed that pupils made above average progress when their starting points and individual circumstances were taken into account. This was also the case for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The satisfactory progress pupils make reflects teaching that is satisfactory overall. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and the proportion of good teaching has increased. However, teaching is not consistently good and this limits the progress in some year groups and in some subjects. Where teaching is good; lessons are well structured and reflect the full range of abilities within the class. Pupils enjoy learning at a brisk pace and being challenged to make good progress. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively. In some lessons, the learning activities do not match the abilities of all pupils sufficiently well to allow them all to make good progress. Some teachers control the planned activities too rigidly and opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills are missed. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give them clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There has been a successful focus on improving planning for literacy and numeracy to remedy the weaknesses in progress identified at the last inspection. The full range of other subjects is delivered, but opportunities to apply the skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology in all of them are underdeveloped. The provision for developing pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is effective. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits that pupils enjoy.

The personal development and well-being of pupils, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and the majority attend school regularly, although there is a small number who do not attend sufficiently regularly to enable them to achieve well. Behaviour is generally good and pupils feel safe in school and have someone to turn to if they face difficulties. Bullying is a rare occurrence and pupils report that it is dealt with effectively. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of healthy lifestyles. The care and guidance that pupils receive is satisfactory overall. However, pastoral care is good and the support for the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is a particular strength. Academic guidance is satisfactory with rigorous systems in place for tracking achievement. These are used well by senior staff and the subject leaders in English and mathematics to develop strategies to raise achievement, but their use by all staff is not sufficiently consistent.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school. There are good strategies for improving the quality of teaching

still further to raise achievement. These are bringing about improvement, but this is not yet consistent. The senior leadership team is well aware of the strengths and areas for development. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate, but there is insufficient involvement of all stakeholders in the process. The role of middle managers in evaluating provision and planning for improvement is developing, but is not yet consistently effective in all subject areas. The governors are fulfilling their statutory duties and are beginning to act as critical friends and to challenge the school to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children are well cared for and settle in to school life quickly. Children start school with levels of development that are well below those typical for their age. Satisfactory teaching results in children making sound progress, but their standards remain below expectations at the start of Year 1. Children benefit from extremely spacious accommodation. However, there are insufficient resources for use in the outdoor area of the Nursery to allow children to gain the maximum benefit from its use. There are plans to develop the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress pupils make in order to raise standards, particularly in writing.
- Improve the consistency of good teaching across the school.
- Ensure that greater opportunities for the application of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills together with independent learning are provided.
- Develop the role of all subject leaders in evaluating the quality of provision and planning for improvement.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but with areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards overall are just below average. Pupils enter the school with skills that are well below those typical of their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, but enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are below national expectations. They continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of the key stage standards are just below the national average. Standards in Key Stage 1 assessments rose steadily from 2004 to 2006, but fell back in 2007 as almost half of this small group of pupils had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and achieve standards that are just below the national average. Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved over the last three years. However, standards in writing remain lower than those in reading and mathematics. When the starting point and individual circumstances of pupils are taken into account those who took the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 made above average progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities also made above average progress as did those pupils looked after by the local authority. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress, but progress in writing is not as consistent as in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils relate well to each other and to the staff as is evident in the cordial atmosphere at break and lunchtime. Behaviour is usually good. Pupils say they feel safe. Bullying is rare and pupils report that these incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils enjoy school. However, this enjoyment is not fully reflected in attendance as a small but significant number of pupils are frequently absent which pulls down overall attendance to below average. The attendance of this small group is improving.

The school's success in becoming a local authority accredited Healthy School has enabled pupils to develop a satisfactory knowledge of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. The Year 4 pupils' achievement in gaining a Food Hygiene certificate is put to good use serving food during lunch and playtimes.

In lessons, pupils' ability to work independently is relatively weak, but they willingly take responsibility in other aspects of school life. Through their school council, pupils develop an understanding of democratic citizenship. For example, their actions raised funds to purchase extra play resources. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to provide a helping hand to younger ones, thereby encouraging a harmonious school community. Pupils' preparation for their future education is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The sound progress that pupils make reflects the satisfactory quality of the teaching. However, teaching is improving and that observed during the inspection included much that was good. Teaching of English and mathematics is better than that of other subjects. The good teaching is characterised by lessons that have a clear structure and defined learning objectives. The planned activities meet the needs of the full range of abilities well and are completed at a brisk pace. Explanations of the activities are clear reflecting good subject knowledge and the effective use made of the interactive whiteboards. Pupils behave well in these lessons, clearly enjoy the work and make good progress. Teachers use questioning well to check the depth of pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think. There is effective use of teaching assistants to support pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and to ensure they are effectively involved in all lessons. Where teaching is less effective, the learning activities do not always match the abilities of all pupils sufficiently well to allow them all to make good progress. In some lessons, the teacher controls the activities too closely and the pace of learning slows. The opportunities for pupils to work independently are underdeveloped and this hinders the progress of pupils and particularly the most able.

Work is marked regularly and teachers give pupils clear advice on what to do to improve their performance and reach their targets. A feature of good practice is that pupils are given time to read these comments and to respond to them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. There is a strong focus on raising standards in English, mathematics and science. The quality of planning for literacy and numeracy has improved significantly and this is starting to raise standards. However, planning in other subjects does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to improve further by applying their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in these lessons. There is an effective range of activities to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well and ensures that the inclusion of these pupils is good.

Pupils benefit from access to a diverse range of clubs ranging from art and sports to gardening and Spanish. These are valued by pupils and well attended. A broad range of visitors to schools and educational visits, for example, to an outdoor education centre and to Blackpool Zoo, adds to the enjoyment of learning. Links with a local specialist sports college benefit pupils by providing good quality sports coaches for a variety of sports, while the local rugby league club also provides specialist coaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support is good and academic guidance satisfactory. The school provides a supportive and caring environment for all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported particularly well. There is effective support for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties through a very well developed mentoring system in a secure and attractive environment, the Eden room. The school works closely with families where persistent absence is an issue and this is beginning to result in improved attendance. Efficient safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet government requirements. Governors and staff monitor health and safety matters well.

Rigorous and precise tracking of progress has been introduced recently. This allows teachers to identify underachievement and develop strategies to raise standards, but is not yet used consistently by all staff. Pupils have a reasonable understanding of their learning targets and benefit from advice on how to improve. These procedures are making a positive impact on academic progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school faced an extended period of uncertainty following the last inspection with significant staff changes. The leadership provided by three associate headteachers in twelve months brought about improvements, but the lack of continuity created a climate of uncertainty amongst the staff. This is now behind the school and the newly appointed headteacher has established a clear vision for an inclusive school that allows all pupils to fulfil their potential. There is a shared commitment by all the staff to improving teaching and raising achievement. The initial focus of this drive for improvement has been to implement a rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching and to provide advice and support. This has already improved the quality of teaching, although not yet consistently and is resulting in improvement in pupils'

progress. Senior leaders and the subject leaders of English and mathematics monitor pupils' progress well. The role of middle leaders in driving improvement has improved, but remains an area for further development. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate, but the process relies too heavily on the headteacher. The governors are taking an increasingly active role in the school and their awareness of the strengths and areas for development has grown. Following training and a revision of the committee structure the governing body is beginning to hold the school to account and to challenge it to improve. This includes the setting of challenging targets for pupils' attainment. The school has demonstrated the capacity to improve by taking back the lead in planning for improvement from the local authority. It currently provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
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	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?	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	3
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	3
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

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seven Stars Primary School, Lancashire, PR25 1TD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we recently inspected your school. You may know that when your school was last inspected it was judged to need special measures to help it to improve because it was not providing you with a satisfactory education. I am pleased to tell you that this is no longer the case and that the school has improved so that it is now satisfactory.

Although the standards of work that you are achieving are just below those found in other schools nationally you are making satisfactory progress. This is because the teaching has improved and is now satisfactory, although there is much good teaching in the school. You study all the subjects that you have to and there is a good range of clubs and out of lesson activities provided for you.

You are well looked after by all of the staff in the school. As a result, you behave well and enjoy coming to school. However, a small number of you do not attend regularly enough and this stops you from learning as much as you should. Staff support those of you who find learning more difficult or who have physical disabilities very well.

Your new headteacher leads the school well and is supported effectively by her senior colleagues and by the governors. There are clear plans to bring about even more improvement in your school. We have asked the staff to work together to help you to make good progress in all your lessons by making sure that all teaching is as good as the very best. We have also asked them to give you more opportunities to work independently and to practise your literacy, numeracy and information technology skills in all lessons. We have asked that the teachers who lead the different subjects should extend their work in checking how well their subject is taught and how well you make progress. You can help them by attending regularly, working hard and telling you teachers the types of activity that help you to learn best.

Best wishes for the future.

Garry Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dave Byrne

Additional Inspector