

Westminster Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111086
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	319258
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Harding
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Finch
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
School address	John Street Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 2ED
Telephone number	0151 3551524
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

When Westminster Primary School was inspected in March 2007, it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues relating to standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and the curriculum. It was subsequently visited in October 2007 when it was judged to be making inadequate progress.

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average and the great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. About 4% are from Eastern Europe and speak English as an additional language. Just under 45% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similarly high at about 50%. The proportion with statements of special educational needs is three times the national average and their needs mainly concern speech and language development or social, emotional and behavioural development. The school is part of the Ellesmere Port Improvement Partnership and has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, the Financial Management SIS, the Parenting Kite Mark and the Activemark

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 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils, whose achievement in English, mathematics and science is now at least satisfactory in all year groups. Standards, which have been significantly below average in the past, are beginning to rise. In most year groups standards are better than those found at the last inspection, being below those expected of pupils for their age rather than well below expected levels. Standards in the current Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are better: they are average and this is a very significant improvement compared to previous years when they have been very low. This improvement is the result of good teaching and learning in the Reception year and Years 1 and 2. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 6, however, are well below expected levels and this is because of the untypical nature of the year group with a very high proportion of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs or learning difficulties, as well as past underachievement which has left staff with too little time to effect significant change. Standards in Key Stage 2 are a key area for improvement.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and behave sensibly. A minority display challenging behaviour or have emotional difficulties and the school has good systems of care, guidance and support to help them to improve their attitudes to learning. The school has developed good links with agencies and other schools to do the best for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they get full benefit from their education. Pupils' awareness of how to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle and to stay safe is satisfactory. They make a good contribution to the life of the school, for instance, through their roles as school councillors, and to the community, when they support charities and take part in local events and festivals.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with examples of good practice. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and small group work is particularly effective. They regularly assess how well pupils are doing and use the information well to plan lessons. The quality of lessons is variable however, and not yet strong enough overall to overcome past underachievement and fill gaps in pupils learning. The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved since the time of the last inspection when there were gaps in coverage, and when information and communication technology (ICT) was found to be inadequate. Resources, provision and pupils' learning in the subject are now much improved and pupils' attainment is rising.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has improved well since the last inspection as a result of good leadership by the headteacher. The staff have made effective use of programmes of support from the local authority and now efficiently monitor and evaluate the performance of pupils and the school in general. Governors have improved their role as critical friends. They have a clear understanding of the performance of the school and take a full part in decision making. Good teamwork among staff has had a positive impact on the initiatives introduced to effect change and improvement. Subject leaders, however, have yet to fully develop the leadership skills needed for them to have best possible impact on the school's development. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is above average but the improved outcomes indicate the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Almost all children join the Reception class after attending the Children's Centre, which is immediately adjacent to the classroom. Their skills are low for their age. A number have poor, unclear speech and limited social skills. Children quickly settle into school because links with staff in the Children's Centre are good and they are well cared for. By the end of the Reception year most children are close to the expected goals in personal, social and emotional development; communication; language and literacy, and mathematics. The carefully planned and varied activities in the Foundation Stage, both indoors and in the well-resourced outdoor area, provide good opportunities for children to improve across all areas of learning. Staff provide clear routines and opportunities that allow children to build positive relationships. A variety of assessments helps teachers to plan work to meet each child's needs well. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and links with the Key Stage 1 teacher are highly effective in providing the appropriate curriculum for the children on transfer.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2.
- Improve teaching and learning so that the quality of all lessons is good.
- Develop the leadership skills of subject leaders.

A small proportion of the schools where 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

The concerted effort of all staff to tackle underachievement through better teaching and effective tracking of how well pupils are doing is having a positive impact. The school has reached one of its targets: raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Almost all pupils in the year group have achieved the level expected of pupils at this age and this indicates good progress by all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils now have a solid foundation of skills in literacy and numeracy with which to start Key Stage 2. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is currently satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection but there is still some way to go before it is good. The main reasons are the gaps in pupils' learning owing to past underachievement when the quality of teaching and learning was inadequate. More pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are now on target to reach the expected level in English, mathematics and science when they are in Year 6. The very few pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress and are well supported by a visiting specialist and staff generally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The attendance of most pupils is good but overall levels of attendance are below the national average. They are adversely affected by a very small number of pupils whose attendance has been poor. Thanks to the concerted effort of the school and the education welfare service, their attendance is showing

improvement. Pupils take on responsibilities well around school and are pleased with the contribution they have made to ideas for improving playground resources and equipment. Playtimes are now more fun, they say. Pupils report that incidents of bad behaviour do occur but not as often as in the past and they know what to do if they are concerned about someone bothering them. Pupils' ability to work in a group in lessons or to work independently is satisfactory. Some pupils need a lot of support from staff in these important aspects of their development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. For example, pupils with additional needs and those underperforming are identified well and effective steps are taken to provide for them. Teaching assistants are particularly well deployed in this respect and, together with the two learning mentors, make a good contribution to individual pupils' learning and group work. Lessons are now planned well to cater for the different levels of ability in class. Teachers use praise and rewards well to promote good attitudes and effort. Learning is often only satisfactory, however, in whole-group sessions, because some pupils have not developed good listening skills and do not concentrate well. This is evident among older age groups and is part of the reason for their past underachievement when inadequate teaching failed to equip them with the necessary skills for learning. Homework is regular and a homework club, where parents often join in, is a particularly effective means of providing for those pupils who find it difficult to work at home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved and now meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Skills of literacy and numeracy are covered well, as are investigative skills in science. A two-year rolling programme of topics in other subjects has been established and is monitored regularly to check coverage. A subject that has developed especially well is ICT and standards that pupils reach by Year 6 are rising from what has been a low base in the recent past. Lessons in personal, social and health education contribute satisfactorily to pupils' personal development and there are regular visitors to school and visits to promote their understanding of good citizenship. For example, Year 6 pupils have visited the Fire Service to explore responsible behaviour in the community compared to anti-social activities and their consequences. A successful initiative has been to provide opportunities for outdoor sports and activities especially aimed at those pupils who are often reluctant to be involved in fitness exercises. French is taught in Key Stage 2 and there is a good range of clubs and two residential visits for pupils to enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is aware of the individual needs of pupils and works very hard to provide for them. Pastoral care is particularly strong. The work of learning mentors and all staff is very effective in helping pupils through times of family stress and emotional difficulties. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place and pupils have confidence in all the adults in school. An example of the school's good support is the effective Breakfast Club, which includes sport

activities twice a week led by external coaches and is popular with pupils. A further example is how the school has welcomed parents into its activities and helped them to participate in the work of their children. Successful workshops are held for parents and attendance is good and growing. A typical comment from parents is, 'I always feel happy to go in and speak with my son's teacher or headteacher.' Pupils know what they need to concentrate on in order to improve, particularly in English and mathematics. This is because teachers often make comments on pupils' work that not only encourage them but also help them to see what they can do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and staff have embraced the local authority's programme of support well and are now in a position of strength to maintain the drive to raise standards and improve provision. The team in place to start the new school year is the strongest there has been for some time and, supported well by an improved governing body, has good capacity to improve. It is well led by the committed leadership of the headteacher, who has revitalised the support of parents after a difficult period. Parents speak highly of the work of the headteacher, for instance, 'I feel the school has definitely improved because of the headteacher's work.' Procedures to evaluate the work of the school are now good and the school's overall judgements about itself match closely those in this report. However, the teachers, some of whom are new to their subject responsibilities, have not yet developed the skills needed to enable them to have full impact on the quality of provision.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	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	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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Westminster Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH65 2ED

I would like to thank you very much for your help when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit very much. Now I would like to share with you what I thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education and it has improved since it was inspected last year. This means that most things that the school does are satisfactory but there are other things the staff need to do to make the school better. These are some of the things that are satisfactory or better:

- all the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- you are growing into sensible students who want to learn and take on responsibilities, for instance, as school councillors
- staff provide you with interesting lessons and good opportunities for sports, visits, residential visits and after-school clubs
- pupils who find school work difficult are helped to do as well as they can by teachers and classroom assistants.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better. There are three things I have asked the school to do:

- make sure that those of you in Years 3 to 6 do as well as possible in English, mathematics and science
- make sure that teachers help you all to make good progress in all lessons
- help the teachers in their roles as subject leaders to be as effective as they can be.

You have a part to play in this: know your targets, work hard in lessons and do your very best!