

Victoria Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111226
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325319
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Marie Cordey

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it 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	
School (total)	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms P Cooper
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Symes
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Victoria Road Northwich CW9 5RE
Telephone number	01606 288 030
Fax number	01606 331 793
Email address	admin@victoriaroad.cheshire.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and representatives from the local community. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school development plan, internal and external monitoring of the school and nine parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which all pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, make progress and enjoy their learning
- pupils' personal development and how well the school cares, guides and supports them
- how effectively leaders and governors work in partnerships with external agencies to promote the academic and personal development of pupils
- how well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make progress and the quality of outdoor provision for these children.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. There are below average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes and a new centre for these children is under construction and is due to open in December 2009. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy School status, Artsmark Gold, Activemark, Inclusion Qualitymark and Eco Bronze.

There is a children's centre located at the school which is not managed by the governing body and did not form part of this inspection. A separate inspection report for this provision is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with outstanding features. Many pupils say that 'it's really good because the teachers care about us and lessons are fun'. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children and their parents are made to feel welcome and this helps children to settle into school life quickly. Throughout the school pupils are encouraged to believe in themselves as well as to think of others. Their outstanding commitment to healthy lifestyles is reflected in a healthy, sensible approach to diet and by taking sport and exercise very seriously. Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good because they are respected and appreciated. In turn, they understand and value people from different walks of life and are active members of their school. The local community is central to the school's character and excellent partnerships with, for example, neighbouring schools and local support services lead to a strong focus on pupils' personal and academic development. The school's ability to involve parents in their child's learning is excellent. Families and the local community are woven in to the school's work through; family learning, the school's 'open door' policy and sessions to help parents to support their child's learning at home. Parents' positive attitudes towards school are reflected in comments such as, 'This school has provided a fabulous learning environment for my child' and 'The school has enabled my child to equip himself with the learning and life skills he will need for his future'.

The quality of teaching is good overall and some outstanding. The overall impact of this ensures that pupils achieve well and they achieve standards that are on the whole similar to national averages when they leave the school. This is good progress overall, because many join the school with well below average standards. Pupils enjoy learning and rise to the challenges set for them. This was demonstrated in a Year 5 lesson when they spoke in Spanish while working out mathematical problems. Effective tracking of pupils' performance means that work is generally adapted to meet individual needs. Consequently, pupils meet their increasingly challenging targets. The careful planning and prompt support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. To raise the quality of teaching from 'good' to 'outstanding' the school is committed to ensuring that all lessons fully focus on the needs of all higher attaining pupils.

The curriculum effectively supports pupils overall development. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enliven teaching and to develop pupils' independence and enhance their computer skills. Parents and pupils appreciate the educational trips and the excellent range of extra-curricular school

clubs that are available. Pupils relish their acting roles in the local high school productions.

Good leadership and management are driving the school forward by involving all staff in its commitment to provide high quality care for every pupil. The school has a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths as well as what it needs to do to improve further. There is full recognition of the need to improve outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to accelerate children's progress in their physical skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The track record of improvement since the previous inspection is good, particularly in raising standards across a range of subjects. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by ensuring all lessons challenge and extend the learning of higher attaining pupils.
- Improve outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children's physical skills and knowledge and understanding of the world are further enhanced.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. They particularly enjoy lessons where they are active and involved or when they are given the opportunity to tackle challenging tasks. For example, Year 6 pupils were observed making plans to develop Northwich as a tourist destination. They discussed, reflected and persevered until they produced convincing, persuasive reasons for holidaymakers to come to their town. In all lessons observed pupils applied themselves well to their learning and benefited from the good relationships they had with each other and with their teachers. Occasionally, higher attaining pupils do not extend their learning, either because lessons are not planned closely enough to match their needs or questions provided by teachers do not prompt them to deepen their understanding. Consequently, although their progress is good overall there are occasions when it is slower than it could be.

The standards achieved by pupils over the last few years are generally close to the national average. There are particular strengths in science and the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2. Taking into account the starting points of children when they enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage this represents good progress overall. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Recent interventions to improve writing across the school have resulted in improved standards in English, which now match the average standards in mathematics and science. A key component in the rise in writing standards is the concentration on speaking and listening and linking writing to learning in all subjects. Evidence drawn from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that standards are improving well in many subjects, including art, geography and religious education.

After a period of unsettled staffing, a trend of well below average attainment and satisfactory achievement for pupils at the end of Year 2 has improved. The school's focus on improving teaching, assessment and planning is bearing fruit. Currently, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and attain below average standards overall.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They feel safe and are aware of potential dangers, for instance, in nearby roads. Nearly all pupils expressed satisfaction with the way in which the school deals with bullying. The very small number expressing concerns know who to turn to if they are troubled. Pupils' have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. The initiatives to encourage them to walk and cycle to school have proved successful and a large number participate in the national cycling proficiency tests. Pupils make excellent contributions to the school and wider community and revel in the many opportunities for them to take on positions of responsibility. They are generous fundraisers for local and international charities. Very good preparation for secondary education, pupils' average standards and their good social skills contribute well in preparing them for the future. Attendance is average. A small number of families take their children on holiday in term-time and this reduces pupils' overall attendance figures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teachers have high expectations and pupils are well motivated and expect to be involved and active in lessons. Lessons are generally well planned to match the needs and interests of individual pupils. For instance, in a Year 1 lesson pupils ordered pictures to show the stages of growth of a bean plant. They then linked this to their work in the school gardens and the outdoor classroom. The teacher and support assistants skilfully asked searching questions to ensure pupils were guided to arrive at their own conclusions as to what had made the plants grow. Teachers mark work regularly and pupils appreciate this. The clear targets set for pupils and their increased involvement in assessing their own work have played a major role in helping pupils know what they need to do to improve further. Occasionally, however,

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

some marking is less focused and does not contribute so strongly in helping pupils to improve their work.

The curriculum is rich, well planned and increasingly links pupils' learning across a number of subjects. This enables pupils to make connections and to draw on their own experiences so that they can apply learning in new situations. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is nurtured well by the school and helps to improve the standards they reach in all subjects. A host of visitors and external visits enrich pupils' experiences and extends their awareness of other cultures and faiths as well as their important role in society.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the care of the local authority are provided with support that is exceptionally well matched to their personal and academic needs. 'Teaching assistants give my child confidence and make a big difference to all our lives' and 'They don't want to leave this school' are typical comments from parents. Children are well prepared for starting school in the Nursery and this continues for each stage of their school lives, helped by excellent links with neighbouring schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share a drive for raising aspirations and improving standards. A palpable sense of purpose is shared by all staff who are committed to pupils' personal and academic development. Loyalty to the headteacher and effective teamwork make for good, working partnerships where middle leaders and teachers willingly take on more responsibility for their classes, pupils' progress and subjects. School self-evaluation is analytical, honest and mostly accurate. It has led to more effective monitoring of the school's performance and has enabled the school to improve standards generally. Governors are increasingly willing to challenge senior leaders and are very involved and supportive. Equality of opportunity for all and the elimination of discrimination are central to the school's ethos. The promotion of community cohesion is at the centre of its work and is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspector observed good safeguarding procedures and current arrangements meet requirements. Parents are very involved in school life, including active participation in actions to improve standards, such as, their contribution to the policies for behaviour and learning. Every effort is made to encourage the more reluctant parents and carers to engage fully with school so that they can play a more effective role in supporting their children's learning. Excellent partnerships with outside agencies underpin the school's work. Strong links exist with neighbourhood groups and the integration of many services such as the police, the

fire brigade, educational psychologists and the children's centre, promote pupils' learning as well as their well-being.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's starting points in the Nursery class are well below expected levels for their age. They progress well to attain levels below those expected for their age at the end of the Reception Year. They make particularly good gains in their personal, social and emotional development and in their language skills. A range of well prepared indoor activities encourage children to explore and enjoy their learning and they are eager to play and learn through linking letters and sounds, role-play areas, computers and water and sand play. There are limitations outdoors with temporary outdoor space and less play equipment than indoors. On some occasions, outdoor activities do not fully engage children because resources are few or do not precisely match children's interests. As a result, their opportunities to explore and develop physically and improve their knowledge and understanding of the world are limited. Good quality teaching and learning stems from good leadership and management which is closely focused on children's progress and personal development. Children become increasingly confident and self-reliant. Good teaching and support build up trust and children make especially good progress in their social development. Children are well cared for and requirements regarding their welfare, health and safety are fully met.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The response to the parental questionnaire was low. Nevertheless, all parents who responded were happy with the school's provision and indicated their children enjoyed school. All parents agreed that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good. They agreed they were informed about the progress their child was making.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Victoria Road Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views. If a parent has more than one child at the school, they were asked to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspector received nine completed questionnaires. In total, there are 146 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	1	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress: the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management: the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria Road Primary School, Northwich, CW9 5RE

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed my visit, especially as I got to know so many of you by name. I appreciated being shown round the school, talking with you and looking at your work.

I found your school to be good and there were some outstanding aspects.

You are keen to learn and this helps you to achieve well. Those of you who have additional or special needs are supported extremely well and these pupils make outstanding progress in their learning. You are confident and caring and you can be proud of the way you represent your school and your local community. You told me that you enjoy lessons most when learning is fun and this was certainly demonstrated by those of you in Year 5 who worked out a mathematic problem in Spanish! Your teachers and teaching assistants plan to make your lessons as enjoyable as possible.

You told me that you feel well looked after by all staff. The care, guidance and support given to you are excellent. Staff are determined to make sure you are happy and you achieve as well as you can. To make your learning even better I have asked the teachers to make sure those of you who find learning easier than most are always given work that really extends them. I have also asked for the outside areas to be made more interesting and exciting for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I wish you every success for the future

Marie Cordey
Lead inspector

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