

Mossgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130262
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	328522
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	George Crowther

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	190
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Vaukins
Headteacher	Ms A C Lawler
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kingsway Heysham Morecambe Lancashire LA3 2EE
Telephone number	01524 850736
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized primary school serves an area where many families experience significant social disadvantage. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, including a significant number who have a statement of special educational need. Four new teachers joined the school at the beginning of term. The school has a Healthy Schools award, an Activemark, and an Investors in People award for its work in staff development. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The staff have created a very friendly, calm and caring environment, which gives pupils the confidence to enjoy their learning. Support for pupils' personal development is very strong and many benefit from considerable care and guidance. Parents recognise these strengths. A typical comment was 'The children are happy because the school is such a positive place'. During a period of considerable staff changes, however, the pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not made enough progress, particularly in writing. Leaders have identified this issue, taken steps to support teachers and worked hard to improve pupils' achievement, but they have not been successful enough. As a result, the good foundations for learning laid in pupils' early years at the school are not being capitalised upon.

Children achieve well in the Reception class. Good teaching and a wide range of practical activities capture their interest and stimulate their learning. Pupils make good progress during Years 1 and 2. This is because basic skills are taught methodically and work is well matched to help pupils take the next step in their learning. In Years 3 to 6, whilst pupils make satisfactory progress overall, the quality of teaching and learning varies too much. The best lessons help pupils to learn quickly; in others, teachers' subject knowledge is weak and the work is not challenging enough to ensure that the pupils make sufficient progress. Achievement is weakest in writing because activities often lack variety, interest and sufficient challenge. Standards in last years' Year 6 national tests were broadly average in reading and mathematics, but weak in writing.

The pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn in lessons. They are friendly, polite and exceptionally well behaved. Relationships are outstanding and pupils of all ages work and play together happily. The pupils have a good understanding about being healthy and they feel safe and cared for. They make outstanding contributions to the school community, for example as members of the Mossgate Parliament and when older pupils act as sports' leaders for the younger ones. Pupils' good personal qualities prepare them well for the future, but aspects of their academic skills are not good enough. A satisfactory curriculum is enriched well by a good range of visits and visitors. Levels of care and support for pupils' personal development are outstanding. Guidance for their academic development, in particular for identifying pupils who are underachieving, is not yet effective enough and holds back the achievement of some pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff changes have thwarted efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and hence pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, in classes where staffing has been consistent, there are examples of determined, successful action to raise standards, for example, in mathematics in Year 6. The headteacher has led these initiatives well, but has been unable to establish them in all classes to ensure an overall improvement in pupils' achievement. Systems to track pupils' progress and to tackle underachievement have not been rigorous enough, but leaders are addressing this weakness. Although the school's self-evaluation was too positive, leaders do have a clear picture of what needs to be done next. This puts the school in a sound position to improve its work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress reaching standards by the end of Reception that are usually close to those expected for their age. The good achievement in the EYFS is as a result of the staff

getting to know children well as individuals and nurturing their learning and development carefully. The classroom is happy place where the children enjoy their learning and behave well. The staff place a strong emphasis on the welfare of each child and on teaching them ways in which they can care for themselves. Activities are interesting and enjoyable, such as when children counted the fish they could catch in the water tray or had an animated discussion whilst playing with a collection of dinosaurs. Learning is usually a good balance between independent activities, such as making shopping lists in the home corner, and adult-led activities, such as reading and re-telling a story. At times, however, the children spend too long sitting and are not active enough. In all activities, the staff encourage, support and enrich children's learning well, particularly language skills, which are weak in some children. The outdoor area is spacious, but its layout restricts some physical activities, and access is through a store cupboard. Staff make the best use they can of this area, and there are plans to improve it. Through regular observations, the staff note the progress children are making and use this information to plan what they need to learn next. Leadership and management are good, with a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the children's learning still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement during Years 3 to 6, particularly in writing.
- Increase the proportion of lessons in Years 3 to 6 where the quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to make rapid progress.
- Identify potential underachievement at an early stage and take the necessary action to combat it.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards when children start school are below those typical for their ages, particularly in language skills. In the Reception class, children make good progress in all areas of their learning. By the time they join Year 1, standards are usually close to average. By Year 2, pupils' achievement is good and standards are broadly average, best in reading but rather weaker in mathematics. By Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Results of last years' Year 6 national tests indicate that an average percentage of pupils reached the expectations for their age. In writing, results could have been better with some pupils failing to make the progress expected of them. Pupils' work shows that writing skills are not being built systematically enough, on a range of challenging tasks, and that teachers are not giving pupils sufficient guidance about how they can improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others, but there are examples of good progress where needs have been identified precisely and extra support given.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Many children start school with weaknesses in their personal skills. The staff do a good job in nurturing pupils' confidence and eagerness to learn; parents say this is a strength of the school. By Year 6, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. A typical comment was 'Lessons are great because there are lots of fun activities.' The pupils are friendly, polite and eager to talk to

visitors. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is first-rate. Relationships are outstanding with pupils showing great respect for each other. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Older pupils have a sound understanding of cultural diversity, but a fairly narrow experience of contrasting communities. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through a variety of special responsibilities. Pupils' good personal skills equip them well for the future, but many have weaknesses in academic skills, such as writing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2. It is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, but varies too much between good and inadequate. Where teaching is good, the activities capture the pupils' imagination and are well matched to help them take the next step in their learning. Teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn, which gives added purpose to the work, and they check on understanding at the end. They explain new ideas in a lively way that makes pupils keen to learn. Where teaching is inadequate, a lack of subject knowledge results in unchallenging work that is not pitched at the right level to ensure the pupils make sufficient progress. Marking does not consistently point out to pupils how they can improve their work. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is tracked thoroughly, which has contributed to good gains for some of these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A broad and relevant curriculum generally meets pupils' needs. Work in English and mathematics is generally satisfactory, but not always interesting or challenging enough. In Years 3 to 6, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and develop writing skills in other subjects. Work in science is often practical, which enthuses the pupils. The curriculum for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection, but the standard of pupils' work is better in some aspects than others. Pupils' good personal qualities owe much to a strong programme of personal and social education. The curriculum is enriched effectively by a wide range of extra activities, including trips to places of interest and a good variety of clubs, ranging from cookery to cheerleading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of pastoral care are outstanding, but academic guidance is satisfactory. Everyone in school is fully committed to ensuring pupils are safe, happy and ready to learn. Systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health, safety and well-being are in place and meet requirements. Any child with emotional or learning difficulties is supported well. Of particular note is the outstanding contribution made by the school's very skilled and knowledgeable Education Support Worker. Links with external care agencies are excellent. Academic guidance is effective in providing a general picture of pupils' progress. It is not, however used well enough to pick out children at risk of underachieving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

During a period of considerable staff changes, leaders have done well to preserve the school's very positive environment for learning, and to maintain the good progress made by the younger pupils. Staff changes have also led to significant challenges in sustaining a consistent quality of teaching and learning and, in this area, leaders have been less successful. Weaknesses in pupils' writing skills have not been fully dealt with. Leaders have checked on the quality of pupils' learning in lessons, but insufficient action has been taken to tackle weaknesses, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is too positive. Despite these weaknesses, leaders have a clear view about what needs to be done to move the school forward. The school development plan sets out very clearly what leaders intend to do and puts the school in a satisfactory position to improve further. Governors make a satisfactory contribution to leading the school. They have a good grasp of the social strengths of the school, but are not sufficiently aware of weaknesses in pupils' academic achievement and what the school is doing about them. The school does a good job in promoting shared values in the school and local community.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

19 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Mossgate Primary School, Lancashire, LA3 2EE

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school to find out how well you are doing. We were struck by the very happy, positive atmosphere and the way that everyone gets on very well together.

When we talked to you and watched you working in lessons, it was clear you really enjoy being at school. You told us about all the jobs you do to help the school run smoothly, such as organising the healthy tuck shop and you clearly enjoy these extra responsibilities. You said you feel safe in school because you know the adults will look after you. It seems you like almost everything about your school and particularly the interesting work in lessons and wide range of activities outside lessons. You behave extremely well and you are polite; I lost track of the number of times children held open doors for me!

From visiting some of your lessons and looking at your work, it is clear many of you are making good progress. We did find, however, that some of the older children are not making enough progress in writing; some of the writing tasks you do are not very interesting and you do not always know what you need to do to improve. The teaching is good in many lessons, but there are times when the work is not challenging enough to help you learn quickly. You say there are lots of interesting things to do at school, and we agree. The children who had been on the residential visit to Lakeside said it was really good fun and there are lots of clubs that many of you attend. The staff do an exceptional job in providing the care and support that helps you to be happy at school, but you sometimes need more help to make sure you are doing as well as you can with your work. Your headteacher and the staff are keen to make your school even better.

We have asked your school to do three things to improve your learning:

help pupils in Years 3 to 6 to make better progress, particularly in writing

make sure that the work you are given in lessons helps you to learn quickly

we want teachers to do more to help those of you who are not doing as well as you might.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead inspector