

Carr Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134661
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	328944
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Wainwright

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	257
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	Mrs S Brammeier
Headteacher	Mrs A Tobin
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kentmere Avenue St Helens Merseyside WA11 7PQ
Telephone number	01744 678223
Fax number	01744 678220

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2009
Inspection number	328944

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an above-average sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A small proportion is from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school is situated in an area of very high social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. There is an average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Awards have been gained recognising the school as a healthy school and one with eco awareness. Since the last inspection a number of new senior staff have been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Carr Mill is a satisfactory school which provides a good degree of care for its pupils. They enjoy coming to school, where they feel safe and well cared for. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive and one comment 'There is no other school I would want my child to be at' summed up the views of many. The good level of care provided and the expectations of the staff result in pupils' good personal development.

Past inconsistencies in teaching have resulted in some unevenness in the rate of pupils' progress. Recent stability in staffing is helping to address these variations and raise standards.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Although children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well, in Key Stage 1 and 2 achievement is satisfactory. On entry to Year 1, standards are below those typically expected for pupils this age, particularly in English. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average overall. However English, notably reading, remains the weakest element. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics have risen gradually in recent years and continued to improve in 2008. However, they remain below average overall. All groups of pupils make similar, satisfactory progress.

Efforts made by staff to effect improvement are supported by pupils' good attitudes. Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in their attendance, which has improved to a broadly average level. They behave well, showing improvement in this regard since the last inspection, and are generally attentive in lessons, being polite and respectful even in those lessons that lack pace and are not planned closely enough to their learning needs. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, it is inconsistent and this slows pupil progress. Strengths include the deployment of the increased numbers of adults who provide extra support for pupils and the way in which pupils' work is marked thoroughly, giving not only praise when deserved but also guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides additional opportunities in which most pupils participate. The successful topic-based approach which is used well in Key Stage 1 is developing at Key Stage 2. Recent awards gained demonstrate the work done to promote pupils' good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given effective support. The coordinator and the learning mentor are key figures in this respect.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The staff team is united and determined to improve all aspects of the school's work. It is well supported by the governing body, which checks that the school is effective in providing for all pupils. However, the monitoring of teaching is insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently good teaching and learning. Good use is being made of a recently improved and thorough system for tracking pupils' progress although it is too early to gauge its impact on standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money and given its track record of improvement has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage reflects good leadership and management. Children start school with skills which are well below those typically seen. Skills in language and communication are very low. On occasions, despite the good efforts of staff to encourage them, some children are reluctant to respond verbally or have difficulty in doing so. A significant

minority require speech therapy to aid their speaking. Children achieve well although by the end of the Reception their attainment is below expected levels for their age.

The Nursery is a warm and welcoming place, where children settle in well. Staff encourage parents to work alongside them which gives children added confidence. Children learn to work and play together well, taking turns with activities and sharing resources. Children in the Reception class clearly gain in confidence and skills because of the relationships adults make with them and the learning opportunities provided. High priority is given to their care and welfare. Developing language remains a priority but the recent introduction of a programme for teaching letters and sounds is already having a positive impact on achievement.

Teaching and learning are good. Adults engage themselves effectively in the children's learning activities and set good examples for them to follow. Curricular planning is of good quality. It includes continuous outdoor provision in two very spacious areas, providing a range of activities for various areas of learning. Preparation for a forthcoming meal to celebrate the Chinese New Year is providing some early knowledge of other cultures.

Effective strategies are used to monitor and assess progress. The information is used well to help children make the next step in their learning. The school has yet to clarify the allocated key person for each individual child in order to make the best use of all staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to be at least consistently good throughout the school.
- Rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to enable improvements to be made where they are needed.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils start Year 1 with below average standards. They make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 although attainment in mathematics has been better than in English, particularly reading. The recent introduction of a new programme of work and other improvements aimed at raising standards in reading are beginning to make a positive difference in both Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Standards overall at the end of Key Stage 1 have generally been broadly in line with the national average in recent years although in 2008 they fell, particularly in English. However, this particular group of pupils made satisfactory progress in relation to their low starting points.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen steadily since 2005 although mathematics has been a weaker area. Provisional data indicates that standards in mathematics improved in 2008. Current standards in Year 6, whilst reflecting recent improvements, remain below average overall and are still not high enough, particularly in English and mathematics. Given pupils' starting points, their achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. However, progress during this key stage is inconsistent, requiring much effort in Year 6 to enable pupils to 'catch up'. Pupils are on track to attain their targets in English although in mathematics they are a

little behind. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The good quality of care provided by the school is reflected in pupils' good attitudes and behaviour. They enjoy coming to school and talk of feeling safe. They play sensibly and safely, showing respect for each other and a sense of fair play when, for example, they take turns using the football pitch. Healthy options at snack time help them appreciate foods which are good for them. A high percentage participates in various additional opportunities for physical activity. This promotes healthy lifestyles. Pupils also take advantage of the spacious outdoor areas for energetic play. Members of the school council are trained in their role and play an active part in school life. Pupils have a range of responsibilities in helping others. In lessons they frequently applaud the efforts of their classmates and show determination to be the school's best attenders. In lessons, pupils collaborate well, not only reinforcing good relationships but also aiding each other's learning. Self-assessment helps them to see how well they are learning. This all contributes to a cohesive school community where pupils feel valued. In addition, thought is given to others less fortunate, such as when organising fundraising activities. The development of their personal qualities and the broadly average standards they attain in literacy and numeracy prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, there is inconsistency in the quality of lessons. Relationships are good throughout the school so that even when lessons lack excitement or pace, pupils still behave well and pay attention. However, few lessons observed during the inspection really set pupils buzzing with enthusiasm. Pupils are often given good opportunities to contribute, supporting the development of their skills in speaking and listening, but on occasions a small number are not drawn in to contribute sufficiently. There is awareness of the different needs of pupils, for which there is sometimes appropriate provision: learning objectives are made clear but on occasions activities are not well-matched to them. In the better lessons, pupils assess their own learning and that of their classmates. Pupils present their work well, meeting their and their teachers' high expectations. Teachers often make good use of interactive technology to help maintain both attention and interest. This is particularly effective when the pupils are actively involved in its use.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets pupils' learning needs. In Key Stage 1 it is topic based so that pupils' learning is linked appropriately through different subjects. In Key Stage 2, the way the curriculum is planned across different subjects allows pupils' English language skills to be developed through work in other subjects. It is still too early to see the full impact of recent initiatives although the promotion of speaking and listening is good in many lessons. There is good provision for pupils to learn about and appreciate the benefits of both healthy lifestyles

and safe practices, impacting positively on their personal development and well-being. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is not yet developed. Provision for curricular enhancement in the form of after-school clubs meets the needs of and involves a high proportion of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school puts great emphasis on the care and support of pupils. There is an awareness of the needs of pupils, some of whom with particular needs benefit greatly from the school's nurturing. Alongside this, every effort is made to involve parents, one of whom commented that the learning mentor 'offered her kind hand' which was of benefit to the whole family. The concern shown for all has resulted in improved attendance and a happy and positive school ethos. There are good links to external agencies, providing further support and opportunities. Pupils' pastoral needs are provided for very well. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements. Systems for tracking pupils' progress have been improved and extended so that it is clear when and where pupils require additional help. Whilst the impact of this is still to be seen in improved progress, it is providing a secure basis to identify priorities. Pupils know their targets, which are displayed in classrooms and in their books. Marking provides encouraging comments and praise for achievement; it also gives guidance on how pupils can improve their work. A Year 6 pupil explaining the importance of targets said that teachers 'push you to take that extra step'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The well-respected headteacher has assembled a strong team of staff at all levels. This has resulted in many recent initiatives in various aspects of the school. Whilst there are early signs of improvement, particularly in aspects of English, it is too early to judge their full impact. Whilst targets are reasonably realistic, in some cases there is insufficient challenge. Self-evaluation shows accurate awareness of some of the school's strengths and needs. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not focused sharply enough on learning and how this helps raise standards. A positive and caring ethos enables all pupils to be included in the school community. There are good links with the local area and in this respect community cohesion is promoted well. However, the school does not yet pay as much attention to the wider communities of the UK and overseas. Staff and resources are suitably deployed. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and provide good support and challenge. They expect full reports of all activities and pose some searching questions. The parents support the school well and have many positive observations to make about it.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 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	2
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 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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Thank you very much for making me and my colleagues welcome and being so friendly when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing how much you enjoy being at Carr Mill. It is good to see how many of you attend the additional clubs and activities provided. You obviously enjoy them!

We judged your school to be satisfactory and with a number of things that are good.

You behave well and show good attitudes towards your teachers and each other.

Some of you have jobs that involve helping others and you also think of deserving people outside the school. You try your best in lessons. The care that all the adults show for you helps you to feel safe and well looked-after.

We know that you and the teachers want to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do three important things to help make this happen. They are:

- to improve the standards you reach in English and mathematics
- to make sure that the best possible learning takes place in all lessons
- to check very carefully that this really good learning is taking place.

Your school is a good community and I am sure that you will all pull together to help make these improvements! Your attendance is much better so keep it up!

Thank you once again.