

Underwood West Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133271
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	331275
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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)	406
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	Mr Lee McKenna
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Tomlinson
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Newcastle Street Crewe Cheshire CW1 3LF
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average primary school situated in an area of very challenging social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high. The school was formed in January 2007 after the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools on the site. The headteacher, previously headteacher of the infant school, has been in post since the school's formation. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is very high at nearly twice the national average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

When the school was inspected in April 2008, it was given a notice to improve and asked to address issues related to: pupils' achievement; the use of assessment information; the curriculum in Year 1; and how effectively leaders and managers use data. It was subsequently visited in December 2008 when it was judged to be making satisfactory progress.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Parents are very supportive of the school. They praise the care and support it provides. Many parents comment on how approachable and helpful staff are. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are now making satisfactory and improving progress after two years of severe underachievement in Key Stage 2. Satisfactory leadership and management are tackling the root causes of pupils' previous inadequate progress and laying firm foundations for the future. However, many of the initiatives are at an early stage and have yet to impact fully on raising standards and achievement. The school has benefited from high quality support from the local authority, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age and make good progress. In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress in reaching below average standards by the end of Year 2. Progress and achievement is slower in Key Stage 2. For the past two years standards in English, mathematics and science have been low and achievement inadequate. However, inspection evidence shows that achievement is improving rapidly. Pupils are making satisfactory progress and standards are showing irrefutable signs of recovery. Chief among the causes of this improving picture is more effective teaching, especially in Key Stage 2. 'Lessons are much more fun. We don't mess about now because teachers make lessons interesting,' is a typical pupil comment. Much teaching is conducted at a fast and lively pace. Pupils are expected to work hard. However, some teaching in Key Stage 2 is too teacher led with the result that pupils do not always have enough opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Standards and achievement are also rising because the school is checking on pupils' progress much more effectively. This enables the school to identify underachievement much earlier and nip it in the bud. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 are not yet fully aware of their targets and, more importantly, some are uncertain about what they need to do to attain them.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is growing strongly. This is seen in much improved attendance rates. They behave well. They are polite and respectful. They work and play together harmoniously. The whole school environment is welcoming, reassuring and friendly so that pupils feel safe and valued. The school has responded to pupils' emotional needs by establishing an array of provision to meet the needs of the large number of pupils who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, the nurture classes make a good contribution to helping the pupils to overcome their difficulties so they enjoy school and can learn effectively. Pastoral care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and grow in confidence and self-esteem as they move up through the school. Pupils' skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. Their skills in literacy and numeracy are improving from low levels. Increasingly, therefore, the school is preparing pupils to take advantage of the next steps in their education and for the future.

The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, is working very effectively to bring about much needed improvement, especially in Key Stage 2. Teamwork and morale is high across the school in pursuit of restoring standards to at least average levels. Rising levels of achievement, much more effective teaching, more efficient and accurate checking on pupils'

progress and much improved attendance all testify to the impact of leadership and management and indicate that there is good capacity for further improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age overall, standards in communication, language and literacy are exceptionally low. Children make good progress to attain standards below those expected by the end of Reception. Good progress is the result of good teaching which is patient and challenging in equal measures. Children work in a stimulating and nurturing environment. There is a wide range of activities both indoors and outside which are suited to their needs and abilities. There is a good balance between teacher led and child led activities. This gets children off to a good start in becoming inquisitive and successful learners. Children's enjoyment is obvious from their happy, smiling faces and their high levels of enthusiasm. Meticulous attention to health and safety ensures that children feel safe. Good links with outside agencies, such as speech therapists, ensure that children receive prompt, specialist support when a need is diagnosed. The school is becoming increasingly adept at checking on children's progress. The outcomes are shared with parents so that they know how well their children are doing and where they can help. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. There are good levels of teamwork, a clear sense of purpose and good use of resources to make sure children get off to a good start in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Make sure that all Key Stage 2 pupils know their targets and what they need to do to attain them.
- Promote pupils' independent learning skills, especially in Key Stage 2.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall during Key Stage 1, and they attain below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In Key Stage 2 pupils' achievement has been inadequate since the school was formed in January 2007. Results in national assessments were very low. In 2007 and 2008 targets for national assessment tests in English, mathematics and science were missed by a considerable margin. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress and achievement are rising significantly. They are now satisfactory because of better teaching and more effective checking on pupils' progress. Challenging targets for individual pupils are set, although overall test results are not expected to show any significant improvement because of the very high proportion of pupils with low starting points in the current Year 6 and a number of higher attaining pupils in Year 6 who have left the school. All groups of pupils are now making satisfactory progress. This includes the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who receive effective support and guidance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave responsibly and show they understand the difference between right and wrong. They enjoy assemblies which give them good opportunities and stimulus for reflection. The school agrees, however, that pupils' cultural development is less well developed and is taking action to improve these aspects. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in school. The school council is a very active body that has brought about improvements to playground facilities and helped raise the importance of punctuality and attendance. Pupils have a good knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, they are able to say which foods are good for them and which are best treated with caution. The personal, social and health lessons are popular with pupils and explain their good knowledge of how to stay safe. They understand the dangers of smoking and substance abuse and other potential hazards to health.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Quality is improving, however, and much is now good. Classrooms contain vibrant displays which provide good support for learners through, for example, the use of prompts for learning. In all lessons relationships are strong. Mutual respect between adults and pupils leads to good behaviour and few instances of disruption. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively throughout the school to provide support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with emotional problems. This enables them all to make satisfactory progress. Teachers plan their lessons well to contain a variety of activities suited to pupils' needs. Teachers use ICT purposefully to support pupils' learning, especially in Key Stage 2. Sometimes, especially in Key Stage 2, teachers talk for too long and ask questions which require simple one word answers with the result that pupils are not encouraged to develop their own learning and thinking skills. Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly but their comments are not consistent in telling pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and developing to meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils. The introduction of themes and topics is starting to promote increased levels of enjoyment as well as making learning more relevant. The Year 6 business enterprise theme, for example, combines pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to good effect. Pupils say how much they enjoy themed days such as the Victorian day and the Viking day which encourage their active participation and lead to high quality displays of their work around the school. Provision to support pupils' basic skills in literacy is a strong focus for the school and is starting to impact on raising standards. Key Stage 2 pupils enjoy learning French which helps broaden their appreciation of foreign cultures. The range of enrichment activities is growing after the appointment of an activities manager. Pupils say that they enjoy what is offered, especially sports, but that opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features such as pastoral support and welfare. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have no problems in turning to adults for help and support if they need them. The school has tightened its procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality by, for example, introducing rewards and displays. This has brought about significant improvement. Attendance is average and punctuality is now satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Attention to health and safety, including risk assessments, is meticulous. The school provides effectively for pupils' social and emotional needs. For example, the 'circle of friends' encourages tolerance and respect for others. Strong links with outside agencies allow the school to call on specialist help and advice when necessary. Support and guidance for pupils' academic development are satisfactory. Checking on pupils' progress more effectively is bringing about improvement. Some pupils are unclear, however, about their targets and how well they are expected to do, especially in Key Stage 2 and how to make sure they achieve to their potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has worked very hard to tackle the prior underachievement at Key Stage 2 with increasing success. There is now a clear agenda for improvement, although many of the strategies have still to impact fully. There is a strong readiness to embrace change. High quality support from the local authority has been welcomed as an integral part of raising standards. Rigour is the watchword for leaders and managers. This is leading to all round improvement, especially in Key Stage 2. Comprehensive measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the school mean that leaders and managers are clear about what the school does well and where it needs to improve. The school improvement plan charts the way ahead with measurable steps to success. Leaders' and managers' strong commitment to equality means that all pupils feel equally valued and cared for as individuals. The school's impact on community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in school and raising money for a variety of charities. However, the school accepts the need to and has plans to develop further pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society and understanding of global issues. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and are starting to use data and information to ask the necessary questions to hold the school rigorously to account for its work and standards.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	4
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?	3

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	2
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?	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

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

Inspection of Underwood West Primary School, Crewe, CW1 3LF

Thank you for your warm welcome when my colleagues and I came to inspect your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you. What you said helped in reaching judgements about your school.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. It is improving strongly and no longer needs a notice to improve. We were pleased to see how polite you are and how well you get on together. You told us that you are enjoying school more because lessons are more fun: I agree. It is good to see that many more of you are now coming to school regularly and on time – well done! Standards in English, mathematics and science are starting to improve in Key Stage 2. It was encouraging to see that you are making better progress. You told us how safe you feel in school and what good care all the adults provide for you. You told us that you especially like the topic work you do in class. I saw from your work how much you are learning from this approach. All the adults working with you are very keen for you to do as well as you can. To help them do this I am asking the school to do three things.

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2.
- Make sure that all of you in Key Stage 2 are clear about your targets and what you need to do to achieve them.
- Help you to develop your skills as independent learners, especially in Key Stage 2, with less reliance on your teachers.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard to make sure that your school continues to improve in the coming years.