

Cathcart Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105048
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336407
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Philip Martin

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Cocker
Headteacher	Mrs R Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	7 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' previous work, policies and procedures, including those concerned with ensuring pupils' safety and well-being, improvement plans and its evaluation of its current strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors also checked the responses to questionnaires sent to parents/carers, pupils and staff. Parents returned 14 questionnaires in time for analysis. Inspectors also read those that arrived after this deadline.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- to what extent the strengths in provision and progress have been maintained
- if the quality of teaching and the curriculum is good enough to raise standards and progress in the key subjects
- the quality of care, guidance and support provided and its effect on pupils' personal development
- the extent and impact of monitoring and evaluation carried by the school's leadership in maintaining and sustaining improvements.

Information about the school

Cathcart Street is a small primary school. The school makes provision for children of Nursery and Reception age in an Early Years Foundation Stage Unit. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. Most pupils are White British and a small number come from a range of other backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The headteacher took up post in September 2008. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, Bronze Eco-Award, the Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

A key strength is the good care and support the school offers to all children and pupils. Many pupils come from difficult circumstances and challenging situations. Staff provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment in which pupils can learn. Pupils enjoy school very much and feel safe. This is verified by their answers to a questionnaire asking for their views. A typical response declares that, 'The staff here help us a lot and support us'. All parents who answered a questionnaire agreed that their children are safe. The school, along with a range of agencies and groups, works well with parents to help them to support their children and to realise the importance of academic as well as personal success. A typical comment from a parent notes that '¿ this is a supportive school'. Despite pupils' enjoyment and the school's determined efforts, attendance rates are low. This is largely because of the poor attendance of a few pupils and the health problems that some children experience.

From low starting points, pupils make satisfactory overall progress. Progress is better than this in English because staff have worked hard to ensure that this important subject is taught effectively. As a result, pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave school. Standards are low but improving in mathematics and science. The school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvements. The school recognises what it does well and where it needs to improve because of the satisfactory systems which evaluate strengths and weaknesses. It has a useful action plan focused on raising standards. It is evident that the work the school is doing to improve teaching and the curriculum in mathematics is having a positive impact. Standards are rising and the quality of teaching is improving. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, teachers are sometimes not fully clear about what they expect pupils to learn. This means that activities are not always as useful as they might be in helping them to learn particular skills. At its best, teachers' marking tells pupils how well they have done and how they could make that type of work better. This quality of marking is inconsistently applied.

Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit with knowledge and skills much lower than those expected at that age. Their communication and social skills are particularly low. They learn well because of the good quality provision. By the end of this key stage, they have made good improvement in those areas in which they were weakest. The good range of resources for these children includes an outdoor area, but this is not always accessible in wet weather because there is no covered space and children's own clothing is not always suitable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards in mathematics and science by:
 - fully implementing the existing plans to improve teaching and learning in both subjects.
- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - making sure that teachers are consistently clear about what pupils are to learn during lessons
 - making sure that the way that teachers mark pupils' work consistently informs pupils about what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing facilities and equipment so that children can learn and play outside in all weathers.
- Raise attendance levels by:
 - encouraging the attendance of those pupils who are too regularly absent.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils start Year 1 with lower than average standards and make satisfactory progress overall. Progress is good in English and by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 they have reached average standards in this subject. Standards in mathematics, though low, are improving as result of the school's continuing focus on improving teaching and learning. Standards in science are also low. The school recognises this and has devised an action plan to improve the situation. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and receive useful support that helps them to make similar progress to their classmates. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English also make satisfactory progress.

Pupils enjoy school. All parents who responded to a questionnaire asking for their views agree with this, as did pupils who took part in discussions with inspectors. Pupils know the importance of staying healthy and different ways they can do this. They usually behave well in class, but a few find it difficult to maintain these standards at times. The school has effective systems for encouraging good behaviour. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities. As a result of their satisfactory achievement and the school's useful focus on helping pupils to develop personal qualities, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next steps in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers in Years 1-6 satisfactorily use their knowledge of how well pupils are doing to plan lessons that match the different ability groups in each class. A good feature of mathematics lessons was the clear link between what pupils were learning and how this related to life outside the classroom. In the better lessons, teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. They share this in a way that helps pupils to understand the steps they need to go through to succeed. Sometimes however, this information is lacking. Whilst teachers keep marking up to date, this sometimes does not link clearly enough to the purpose of the lesson. In some cases, it offers advice how to improve in the particular task. This feature is sometimes missing. The curriculum is rightly focused on providing pupils with basic literacy and numeracy skills. They use their literacy skills satisfactorily in other subjects, for example when recording their experiences in 'International Week'. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of activities that add extra interest, enjoyment and an understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Teachers are deeply concerned for pupils' welfare and learning and look after them well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have gained an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses through useful systems of monitoring and evaluation. The team has devised plans for further improvement which are based on the right priorities. The plan for further improving mathematics in partnership with the local authority is robust and having a positive and measurable impact on teaching and standards. Governors provide a satisfactory degree of support and challenge. They have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met. The school draws on partnerships with a wide range of agencies and tries hard to involve parents in order to improve provision. This extends to good links with agencies and groups in supporting pupils' personal development. This is a central part of the school's work because of the serious nature of the barriers to learning that many pupils experience. The school has a good awareness of the pupils' backgrounds and makes a satisfactory contribution towards promoting community cohesion. It has engaged in some effective work to bring in members of the local community, for example, the 'International Week' and joint activities within the region. Existing links with schools in other countries make a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of children from different backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children start in the Nursery with standards well below those expected for their age. Their communication and personal, social and emotional skills are particularly low.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher and other staff carefully assess children's progress and use this information to plan work and activities that match their needs. They provide a good balance of adult-led activities and those that the children start themselves, although many need to learn how to play on their own initiative. Staff work hard to develop children's communication and social skills and they ensure that all welfare requirements are met. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage most children are willing and happy learners. They are increasingly comfortable talking to adults and to each other. They know how to stay healthy and safe, for example, when putting out equipment for physical education. They experience a good range of activities, although wet weather sometimes limits their opportunities to learn and play outdoors. They make good progress and standards, although still below average, are closer to age-related expectations at the end of the stage than they were at the start. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The leader has a good overview of provision and leads an effective team of staff.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

All of the parents who responded to a questionnaire about their views agree, or strongly agree, that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. Most parents agree or strongly agree with the other points. A typical comment notes that 'the school has a happy atmosphere.' A very small number of parents felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team agrees with the parents positive views and finds that the school has effective systems in place for dealing with misbehaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cathcart Street Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	71	5	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	59	6	35	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	65	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	59	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	65	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	47	7	41	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	53	7	41	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	47	6	35	3	18	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	53	7	41	1	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	53	7	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	71	4	24	1	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 December 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Cathcart Street Primary School, Birkenhead, CH41 3JY

I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we inspected your school. I would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with inspectors and those who completed the questionnaire.

There are many positive things about the school which I found are giving you a satisfactory education. It is very clear that the adults in school care a lot about all of you. You told me that you enjoy school very much when I talked to you and in the questionnaires. It works with other groups well to make sure that you are looked after and kept safe but some of you are absent from school too much.

Children in the Foundation Unit get off to a good start but they do not have enough opportunities to play and work outside. By the time you leave school, you are reaching standards in English that are close to what they should be. The standards you reach in mathematics and science are quite a way below what they should be at your age. They are improving in mathematics because your teachers are working well with the local authority to help you to learn. They use what they know about how well you are doing to plan satisfactory lessons, but sometimes they do not tell you clearly enough what you are going to learn. Sometimes, the way they mark your work could be more helpful.

I have asked the school to do the following things to make it better than it is now by:

- making sure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit have the right kind of equipment so they can learn and play outside
- making sure that what you learn in mathematics and science helps you to reach the standards you should
- improving teaching by making sure you know what you are meant to be learning in each lesson and marking your work so that you know how you can make it even better.

You can help by continuing to try your best at all times and making sure you come to school as often as possible.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Philip Martin

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