

Witton Church Walk CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111389
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337674
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Laws
Headteacher	Mr Steve Docking/Mrs Julie Downing
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, looked at school assessment records, teachers' planning, school improvement plans, records of checks on the school's effectiveness and analysed 69 parent questionnaires.

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

the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including how well they are taught to enable them to make the progress expected of them

how well pupils learn and make progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, with a particular focus on the development of their reading, writing and mathematical skills and the standards they reach in science

the impact of leadership on the extent to which the school is able to sustain any recent improvements.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school situated close to the town centre. The majority of pupils attend from the local neighbourhood. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. About twenty per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is about average. Eighteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is also similar to the national average. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage comprising a full-time Nursery and two full-time Reception classes. At the time of the inspection the school was led by two acting headteachers seconded from other schools.

The breakfast club and after-school club, both managed independently, were inspected separately and received a separate report which is available on the Ofsted website.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' learning, progress and attainment in reading and writing at Key Stage 1; the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1; and in the effectiveness of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage on children's learning and development. Following a period of considerable disruption to the leadership, the school has now entered a more settled phase. The experienced acting headteachers are providing stability, vision and a clear direction for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is aware of what needs to be done to improve. There has been a good start in developing and training other staff. In their work to develop the management skills of middle leaders and ensure that they assume and share responsibility for school improvement, the acting headteachers have had a good impact on improving the teaching and learning in Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils' progress and achievement has improved. Following a decline in standards in 2007 and 2008, standards in English in 2009 are now similar to the national average and standards in mathematics and science are a little below. This improvement continues and is reflected in the quality of pupils' work seen by inspectors and the consistent and accelerated progress pupils are now making as a result of good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching in Key Stage 2. This positive impact of the actions taken by the school to secure improvements so far and strengthen middle leadership demonstrates that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Pupils enjoy good relationships with staff and with each other. Their social and moral development is good and they behave well. They are enthusiastic about learning. When lessons are enjoyably challenging, pupils respond with interest and produce work of satisfactory quality and better than this in good and outstanding lessons. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is average. They are beginning to develop awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles and thrive on opportunities to make a positive contribution to their school and the wider community.

There has been insufficient time for school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of provision and outcomes for these children are inadequate. Inadequacies in teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stage 1 led to standards in 2008 and 2009 that were significantly below average in reading and writing. These inadequacies, particularly in relation to the use of assessment information to provide appropriately challenging activities, remain and have

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resulted in inconsistent progress across the key stage. However, some good teaching of number skills in Key Stage 1 is beginning to lift standards in mathematics so that they are now broadly average. The overall quality of the teaching of reading and writing skills is, however, not consistent or strong enough to help pupils overcome their underachievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage or the weaknesses in their skills on entry to Year 1 in order to reach the standards of which they are capable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils reach higher standards in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 by:
 - eliminating inadequate teaching and making sure more is of a good enough quality to improve pupils' progress
 - ensuring that assessments are used to plan more appropriately challenging learning activities for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - eliminating inadequate teaching
 - improving the organisation of the curriculum and learning opportunities to fully meet the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements
 - increasing the effectiveness of the leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage in monitoring the impact of the provision and promoting rapid improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

When lessons are interesting and provide suitable challenge, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. In Key Stage 2, for example, they discuss with each other how they will make their writing more interesting by using sequences of descriptive words. However, too many pupils do not receive sufficiently challenging learning opportunities in the Key Stage 1 classes to progress as quickly as they need to in order to reach the standards that they should.

There has been sufficient improvement in learning and progress in Key Stage 2 to enable pupils to attain standards by the end of the key stage that are close to the national average. However, pupils' learning, progress and achievement are inadequate overall because of significant weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Children make inadequate progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and they do not reach the levels of skill required in the key areas of language development, literacy and numeracy that will enable them to learn effectively in Key Stage 1. Standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1 are broadly average. Although there has been recent improvement, standards in reading and writing remain below average because weaknesses in teaching prevent pupils from making up the short comings in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are good interventions, such as a specific programme to improve pupils' reading skills and one-to-one tuition by effective

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teaching assistants, that enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make satisfactory progress overall.

Pupils say that they feel safe and they have a satisfactory awareness of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Their attendance is average and they enjoy school. The school's provision ensures that pupils' social and moral development is good and their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They enjoy making a contribution to the development of their school, suggesting ideas for improving it and helping to make it a bright and welcoming environment, with good quality art work that is attractively displayed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Too many children and pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 experience unsatisfactory lessons that hinder their learning and progress. Pupils are not, therefore, prepared adequately with secure basic skills in literacy and numeracy to benefit from the overall good teaching in Key Stage 2. A significant weakness in the inadequate lessons both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is

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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teachers' inaccurate assessments of prior learning. In these cases, lessons are not planned and taught well enough to ensure a match of learning opportunities to the needs and interests of children and pupils. This is compounded in the Early Years Foundation Stage by a lack of understanding by teachers of how the curriculum and learning resources for very young children should be organised and implemented. When lessons in Key Stage 1 are inadequate, it is often because too many pupils in a class are provided with worksheets that they cannot read well enough. They therefore do not know how to show what they have learned, are confused about the objectives for their learning and have unsatisfactory opportunities to practice their skills. In contrast, good and outstanding lessons in Key Stage 2 provide good models for matching learning resources closely to pupils' abilities. This occurs because the teachers know each pupil's abilities well from careful assessments, organising learning groups accordingly and providing activities and support that promote good learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with emerging strengths in the way that wider partnerships with other local schools and visiting experts in the arts promote the learning of pupils in Key Stage 2. This is evident in the good quality of art work seen displayed proudly around the school.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. The quality of care for pupils' social needs is good across the school. Pupils comment that they feel well supported if they are upset or anxious. They trust that the adults in school will give them suitable guidance if they have any concerns that affect their well-being. The school's welcoming atmosphere reflects the Christian values on which it is based; parents acknowledge the school's commitment and sense of duty in its provision of good quality pastoral care for their children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteachers have, in a short time, provided the vision for improvement that the school needed. They have worked hard to present other leaders and governors with a realistic picture of the school's weaknesses and developed the skills of middle leaders to be accountable for improvement. In this short time, there are clear indications of satisfactory improvement, such as that seen in the better quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 and the resulting improvements in progress seen in the recent assessments of the current pupils in Years 3 to 6. Although there has not been enough

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time to have an impact on provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards of reading and writing in Key Stage 1, through their improvement plans school leaders demonstrate commitment to ensuring that children and pupils have equality of opportunity to do well.

The school has communicated well with parents and carers, so that families have kept faith with the school through a difficult period. This is because, as recorded in comments on returned questionnaires, parents view the school as a place with a good atmosphere that empathises with their children's social needs and promotes their well-being. Within its locality, the school shows commitment to community cohesion through work such as that to provide family support systems. Some work has been started to promote pupils' wider international awareness but this is at an early stage. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements.

In response to the challenges they faced over securing stable leadership, governors restructured their committees in order to work more effectively and gain a clearer picture of the school's weaknesses and meet its needs. The result of this is that they are in a better position to support and challenge leadership to improve the effectiveness of the school.

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	3
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

There are significant weaknesses in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes are happy, settled and keen to learn. They get along well with the other children and adults. They enjoy

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playing together and sharing activities in a spirit of friendship. Adults care for the children's welfare and safety appropriately and the children feel secure. However, the overall quality of teaching is inadequate and, consequently, children do not achieve as well as they should.

Parents comment that they feel the needs of their children are suitably met but the inspection found that too many of the staff have weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Therefore, they do not implement these requirements successfully. For instance, Nursery and Reception children do not benefit from a balance of indoor and outdoor play and learning that promotes their progress and independence adequately. Activities for them do not promote development across all of the areas of learning well enough to ensure that they achieve as they should. This is often because staff make inaccurate assessments of the children's skills and development. They then too often plan inappropriate activities for the children which either present too much of a challenge for them or do not provide sufficient interest. Consequently, children are not provided with good enough opportunities to develop the expected skills across all of the six areas for their learning, both inside and outdoors. This results in varying degrees of underachievement for most of the children. There has not been sufficient focus on addressing these concerns because, while school leaders have begun to identify these issues, there has not been enough rigour in leading and managing the Early Years Foundation Stage to bring about the rapid improvements required.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. They have maintained confidence in the school through an extended period of difficulty when leadership changed frequently. They comment that this is because they know their children enjoy positive relationships free from conflict and that the school cares well for their children's emotional well-being and that it promotes their social and moral development. There were a small number of parents and carers who voiced concerns. A small minority voiced concern about the sharing of the headship role between two headteachers; the inspection found that this arrangement is having a positive impact on improvement. A similarly small number suggested that improving home-school communication would help parents to get to know the teachers better but this comment came from parents

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whose children were fairly new to the school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed a variety of views that their children could enjoy school more, make better progress, and help them to support their children's learning better. The inspection agrees that the school could, and must, help its Early Years Foundation Stage children and Key Stage 1 pupils to make better progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Witton Church Walk CofE 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 297 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	65	22	32	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	64	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	43	36	52	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	51	31	45	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	54	29	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	45	32	46	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	54	27	39	5	7	7	10
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)	28	41	37	54	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	41	39	57	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	42	34	49	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	36	40	58	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	46	31	45	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	62	23	33	2	3	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.



14 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Witton Church Walk CofE Primary School, Northwich, CW9 5QQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspectors who visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out your views of the school. You were polite and helpful to us and you helped us very much in our work.

The inspectors decided that there are some good things about your school, such as how well you behave and the good care that the adults show to you if you are worried or upset about something. We also liked the wide range of styles of art you explore and the good quality of the art work you produce. Recently, there have been some improvements, particularly in helping pupils in Key Stage 2 to improve the standards of their work. However, we had to tell your headteachers that there are some things that need urgent improvement and so we have given the school a notice to improve. This means that some inspectors will come back soon to check how well the school is doing in helping you to do better in your work. We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- to make sure that the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive better teaching and activities to help them to learn well enough and reach higher standards
- to make sure that the pupils in Key Stage 1 are given the help they need to reach higher standards in their reading and writing.

The inspectors saw how much you enjoy learning when you are given good opportunities to do well. You can help your teachers to reach these targets the inspectors have set by continuing to try hard. You could also work with your teachers by helping them to see which ways of learning help you to make the best progress.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Martin

Lead inspector

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