

Pensby Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135497
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	341656
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Spencer
Headteacher	Ms K Brown
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kentmere Drive Pensby Wirral CH61 5XW
Telephone number	0151 6482643
Fax number	0151 6481583
Email address	headteacher@pensby-primary.wirral.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with staff, pupils, governors and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including records of pupils' progress, development plans and curricular planning. Inspectors received responses to the inspection questionnaires from 36 parents, 16 staff and 120 Key Stage 2 pupils.

- why, for last year's leavers, progress in Key Stage 2 was much better in English than in mathematics
- pupils' current achievement
- how effectively this new school has been established and the management of change since it was created four terms ago.

Information about the school

This average-sized school was formed in September 2008 on the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools and a small primary school. Some staff came from the predecessor schools but half the class teachers and the headteacher were new appointments. There are nine classes from Reception to Year 6, all but one catering for single year groups, and there is a Nursery attended part-time by 40 children. The school serves an area with pockets of considerable disadvantage. The proportion of pupils having free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average for this size of school. Plans for a new school building are well-advanced. The school holds a number of awards, including Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark.

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

2

Main findings

The school has made great strides since it opened just four terms ago. Parents, governors and staff told the inspectors about improvements, especially in teaching, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. Under good leadership from the headteacher and senior team, the school has developed into a unified primary school which provides a satisfactory standard of education. Aspects of its work are good. These include pupils' personal development, pastoral care, and the leadership and management of the school by the senior staff and the governing body. What has been achieved to date, along with the accurate identification of areas for development, shows the school is well placed for further improvement.

Pupils' academic progress is satisfactory overall, though variations in the quality of teaching mean that the rate of learning differs between classes and some brighter pupils do less well than they could. Taken overall, teaching is satisfactory. Children are making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). Progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 most pupils are making good progress in English. Attainment in mathematics and science lags behind but has begun to improve. The school has established good systems for keeping track of each pupil's progress. Nonetheless, in a few instances, teachers' assessments do not match the standards of work in pupils' books.

Last year staff worked hard and successfully to improve the teaching and curriculum in English. As a result pupils made rapid progress in English in Year 6 and attained well above average standards in the 2009 national tests. This shows what the pupils are capable of, and staff know that the challenge now is to push up standards in mathematics and science to the same level. The school's curriculum has been reviewed and it provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to write with a purpose in many subjects. This has been a contributory factor to the rise in standards in English. Sound plans are in hand for a similar drive to improve standards in mathematics as the next priority.

Pupils' personal development is good. They are well-informed about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They develop a good sense of right and wrong and good social skills and they contribute well to the school and the wider community. Their knowledge and understanding of diversity in Britain and the wider world, is however, less well-developed.

Leadership of this new school has been well-judged. The headteacher tackled appropriate priorities in the school's first year. These included establishing whole-school policies and routines, improving teaching and securing the leadership and management

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of core subjects (English, mathematics and science) at senior level. These subjects are led well. However, leadership and management of other subjects have not been sufficiently developed to underpin work across the curriculum under the school's new curricular arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve pupils' progress in mathematics and science by:
 - strengthening teachers' understanding of how to teach these subjects well
 - raising teachers' expectations
 - integrating more effectively the development of pupils' knowledge and their skills to use and apply it.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better, in particular by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons
 - ensuring that all teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately against the levels of the National Curriculum.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of subjects beyond the core of English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' cultural development and the promotion of community cohesion by providing a wider range of opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural, ethnic and social diversity in Britain and the wider world.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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' achievement is satisfactory and there are clear signs of improvement. For example, children's rate of progress in the early Years Foundation Stage is better this year than last and attainment in mathematics in Year 4 is broadly in line with expectations for the pupils' age. When children start the Nursery, many can do less than is typical for their age, particularly in early literacy and numeracy. Children are now making good progress in Nursery and Reception, though this was not the case for those who moved in to Year 1 this school year. For them, attainment was below average in early reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' satisfactory overall progress in Key Stage 1 results in standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. However, expectations are not always high enough for the older and the more able pupils in this key stage. This was evident in the assessments last year, when few Year 2 pupils reached an above average standard, particularly in mathematics, and in the teaching seen and work examined during the inspection.

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In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make good progress in English where the standards of work in Year 6 are currently at least in line with expectations for their age. Test results last year were considerably lower in mathematics and science. Inspectors focused on mathematics and judge that attainment is rising and Year 6 pupils are on course to do better this year. Mathematical progress for the more able pupils is hindered in some lessons when work set for them is not sufficiently challenging or offers limited opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well. They make sound progress in their learning.

Learning is supported well by pupils' good attitudes. They are usually well-behaved, attentive and hard-working in lessons. They enjoy learning and are keen to reach their targets. In the most successful lessons observed, pupils sustained concentration very well and worked very productively both individually and in pairs.

Throughout the school pupils make good progress in their personal development. They are generally well-behaved and, in some of the lessons observed, behaviour was exceptionally good. Pupils say incidents of bullying are very rare. Discussions with pupils and their responses to the inspection questionnaire show that they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise. They benefit from good opportunities to participate in a range of sports and are encouraged to walk or cycle to school. Pupils learn about world faiths but are not well-informed about diversity in Britain and the wider world. Pupils are well-prepared for the future because they develop good social skills and personal attributes and a clear sense of right and wrong, they establish a pattern of regular and punctual attendance and they acquire sound key skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but it varies considerably. In the lessons seen on inspection teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The school's senior team is aware that the quality has occasionally slipped to inadequate. Typically staff encourage pupils and provide work that is varied according to pupils' different levels of attainment.

In the teaching which was good or better:

- learning moved along at a good pace which kept pupils engaged and productive
- pupils had good opportunities to work together and learn from each other
- teaching assistants were deployed well and made a good contribution to pupils' learning
- assessment was used well and teachers adapted their plans 'on the hoof' in response to how well pupils grasped the work.

When teaching was at its most effective, relationships were excellent, with the teacher highly attuned to pupils' individual learning needs and providing highly effective but unobtrusive support and challenge. She explained very clearly the skills pupils were to learn and practise during the lesson so they knew what was expected of them and could judge their own success.

The shortcomings which made some teaching simply satisfactory were primarily:

- lack of precise matching of work to pupils' learning needs, including pitching work high enough for the more able pupils
- missing opportunities to help pupils use and apply what they know, for instance, to find ways of working out mathematical calculations and to correct misconceptions.

Marking of pupils' work is often good with clear, well-focused guidance about how to do better. There are instances, however, of teachers not complying fully with the school's marking arrangements and of some generous assessments of attainment.

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum which covers all requirements. It includes some good enrichment activities and a range of clubs out of lesson time. The curriculum has been developed during the last year. For example, the curricular plans have been adapted in order to teach several subjects through themes which are designed to appeal to pupils. For the most part the curriculum supports pupils' personal development well but it is simply satisfactory in the provision for pupils to learn about diversity.

Pastoral care is good. Pupils know that the staff care about them and the school works in good partnership with other agencies to support those with additional needs. Pupils'

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responses to the inspection questionnaire show that they feel well-supported as they move up through the school.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school well and she is well-supported by senior staff and the governing body. There has been a relentless drive for improvement and much has been achieved. The focus in the school's first year was understandably on establishing a unified school with shared, agreed policies and procedures, and improving teaching where necessary. These priorities have largely been achieved. Additionally, there has been a successful drive to raise attainment in English, assessment procedures have been strengthened and the curriculum has been reviewed and adjusted, though there is more to do to consolidate and fine tune it.

The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are led effectively by senior staff with a determination to ensure that all pupils do as well as possible and this commitment to equality is shared by governors. At whole-school level, planning for continuing development is well-focused, with mathematics as the next priority. However, the arrangements for leadership and management of other subjects are not always sufficiently robust or influential. The school is aware of this issue and has plans to tackle it.

The school has good systems for setting targets for pupils' progress each year and regular assessments of their progress towards them. As part of this process of establishing a culture in which teachers are held to account for pupils' progress, much has been done to support accurate assessment. Nonetheless, senior staff are aware that a few instances remain where teachers' assessments are not fully convincing. The governing body makes a strong positive contribution to the school's development. Governors have good working relationships with staff and are well-informed about the school's performance. They strike a good balance between support and challenge.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to contribute to school life and they learn to work together purposefully and cooperatively. They learn about diversity in religious education and from some visitors to school. However, there is scope to broaden this provision so pupils understand more about diversity in Britain and the wider world and have more opportunities to meet and engage with those from different backgrounds.

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The procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and the school works in close partnership with other agencies to safeguard pupils. Staff are well-trained in this regard. There are good arrangements for regular reviews of all relevant policies and updating for staff and a governor maintains oversight of safeguarding arrangements. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and kept up to date.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
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

Good leadership and management of this key stage have resulted in strong teamwork across the key stage and good achievement for the children. Teaching is, in the main, of good quality and the school's records show that children are now making good progress from a below average starting point.

Partnerships with parents are good. Induction to Nursery and transition to Year 1 are managed well. Links with the on-site 'wraparound care' are strong and contribute positively to the good quality care, support and guidance provided for children and to a coherent educational experience for them.

Teaching assistants are deployed well and contribute significantly to children's learning and development.

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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

The table below shows that the overwhelming majority of parents who returned the inspection questionnaire are satisfied with the school, their children's progress and the teaching. They know their children enjoy school and feel they are listened to. A few parents are dissatisfied on some points. The inspectors considered these matters but found no evidence to support their view. For example, the school's curriculum covers healthy lifestyles well, there are a number of sporting activities on offer and staff go to considerable lengths to encourage pupils to participate in them. The school's leaders are doing a good job and, as a result, there is already evidence of improvement in provision and achievement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pensby 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	69	10	28	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	64	9	25	4	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	58	12	33	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	64	12	33	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	64	11	31	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	50	14	39	4	11	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)	19	53	14	39	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	61	13	36	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	44	16	44	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	56	15	42	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	69	7	19	3	8	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	67	11	31	0	0	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.



Dear Pupils

You may remember Mrs O'Keefe, Mr Helm and I visiting your school recently to check how well you are all learning. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us about your work and life at school. We learned a lot from seeing your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you. This letter is to tell you the main things we found out about your school.

Mrs Brown and the governors are doing a good job. They and the teachers have done well to create a single school out of three schools and to make quite a lot of improvements, all in just four terms. We know that you have helped too. For example, people told us that behaviour has improved. We were pleased that you behave well and work hard in lessons. You are making satisfactory progress in your learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the children in Nursery and Reception are getting a good start. Last year's leavers did very well in English. In some of your lessons teaching is outstanding but we think some lessons could be better. This would help to raise standards in mathematics and science, where you do not do so well as in English, and help the most able pupils to do better.

The adults at school care for you and you are looked after well at school. You all get on well together and you show concern for others who sometimes have very different lives from yours. We would like you to learn more about the lives and traditions of people from different backgrounds in Britain and the wider world.

We are confident that the school will keep getting better because the grown ups are determined that it will and they know what needs to improve. We know that you will have some good ideas to help. You have our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

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