

Neston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110987
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	356844
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brenda Mooney
Headteacher	Mr Rob Golding
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2007
School address	Burton Road Little Neston, Neston Cheshire CH64 9RE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nine lessons or parts of lessons were observed involving six teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the chair of the governing body and one parent. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, school assessments, planning and school policies, including those concerning the safeguarding of pupils. Questionnaires from 52 parents or carers and 138 pupils were read and analysed, as well as those from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well pupils in Key Stage 1 classes are doing.
- Why achievement in mathematics appears to be not as good as in English in Key Stage 2 and whether different groups of pupils are doing as well as they should.
- What the school is doing to reduce the number of persistent absentees.
- What the strengths of the school are, including provision and leadership and management.
- How robust are all aspects of safeguarding.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. The school population has fallen slightly since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. No pupil is at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school hosts a privately run nursery class, which is subject to a separate inspection. Since the time of the last inspection, there has been a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher. The senior leadership team has been in place since January 2010. The school has the Active Sports mark, the Healthy School status, the Inclusion Quality Mark, the Silver Eco-Schools Award, the International School Intermediate Award and the Gold Sing-Up Award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good education for its pupils. They achieve well and enjoy school very much. The level of skills that most children have when they start school is below the expected levels and they get off to a good start in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 vary according to the nature of the year group. Attainment is broadly average overall. Attainment last year was in line with the national average, whereas attainment in the current Year 6 is above average. The trend in recent years has been for attainment in English to be higher than in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good and their awareness of how to stay safe and the contribution they make to the school and wider community are outstanding.

The quality of teaching is good and leads to pupils' enthusiasm and good learning in lessons. Recent rigorous monitoring has led to improvements so that teaching is now never less than good. The impact of the monitoring is evident in the improved learning and progress in the current Key Stage 1 classes, which in recent years have been only satisfactory and are now good. Staff use assessment well to provide an accurate level of challenge for the different levels of attainment in their classes, though the more-able pupils are not stretched sufficiently in a small minority of lessons. The curriculum is good and has some outstanding features, especially the enrichment activities, its international dimension and the quality and range of extra-curricular clubs. In recent years, a focus on improving pupils' writing skills has had a very positive impact. A slight fall in pupil numbers this year has led to the introduction of mixed-aged classes in Key Stage 1 and this has generally been successful. However, the curriculum is not yet fully embedded in Key Stage 1 and in one year group there is an imbalance of opportunities for pupils to write at length. All aspects of care, guidance and support are good and mean pupils feel well cared for and know who to turn to if they require help.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have been central to the drive to improve the quality of provision, motivate pupils to achieve well and raise the profile of the school in the community. The support and challenge provided by the governing body are outstanding. Procedures to safeguard the welfare of pupils are excellent. School self-assessment is accurate and based on a robust analysis of data. The school has improved since the time of the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory, and its capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the drive to improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:

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- consistently challenging the more-able pupils
- raising the profile of mathematics in school, for example through special events and more prominent use of display.
- Monitor the quality of the curriculum in the mixed-aged classes in order to confirm equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy lessons very much and make good progress. They have very good attitudes to learning and answer questions and volunteer answers readily. They report that teachers make lessons interesting and fun and as a result they are keen to take a full part. They are proud of their school's achievements and often take home ideas from lessons to explore at greater length using the Internet and library. Staff monitor the progress of different groups of pupils regularly, such as boys and girls, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is no trend of underachievement in any particular group, though the more-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.

Pupils behave well and are very polite and welcoming to visitors. They report that the school is a friendly place; bullying is rare and if it arises they are confident the staff will deal with it swiftly. Parents and carers endorse these positive views. Attendance rates are consistently in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees has fallen in recent terms thanks to robust systems to target them. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe, especially in relation to using the Internet. They contribute to the school's healthy lifestyle agenda in a number of important ways, for example helping to run the 'Snack Shack'. The vast majority take part in at least one of the many extra-curricular sporting clubs. By being school councillors, play leaders, buddies and eco-warriors, they make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school. They also have an increasingly high profile in activities in the town. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Of particular note is their empathy with those less fortunate than themselves. This has been very evident in the fundraising they have initiated to support victims of recent earthquakes worldwide and their regular donations to national and international charities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Strengths of the teaching include very good relationships between all staff and pupils, the effective role of teaching assistants and the stimulating nature of many activities. This was evident in an outstanding lesson in which pupils were devising a radio advert. The teacher introduced an entertaining film clip which instantly grabbed the pupils' attention and later made use of the work of a professional working in local radio to motivate the pupils to match his efforts. This had the added benefit of linking the topic to the world of work. Staff mark pupils' work conscientiously with a view to helping them to understand the next steps in their learning and how to reach the targets which are set each half term. Teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution to small group activities and the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Planning is generally good though there are a few instances when the more-able pupils are not stretched sufficiently.

The International Primary Curriculum engages the pupils in many memorable experiences. This was very evident when pupils were confronted with the destruction of a display illustrating the importance of the rain forest to the world's climate, which they had spent a lot of time on. They were shocked and depressed by the wanton devastation. This led to them taking on the roles of various people affected by the relentless deforestation of the world's rain forests and they showed considerable empathy in their follow-up discussion. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well, for example through

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lessons in personal, social, health and emotional development. In addition, French is taught to all Key Stage 2 classes and all Year 5 pupils learn a musical instrument. A school-wide focus on the English curriculum has had a significant impact on pupils' achievement in reading and writing, but mathematics has not received as much attention to raise achievement.

The two learning mentors and special educational needs coordinator promote the welfare of pupils well, especially those from more vulnerable backgrounds. The school has set up a successful quiet room for the very few pupils who require extra space to manage their emotions. Links with agencies such as social services and the educational welfare service are effective in supporting individual pupils and families. Arrangements for pupils to transfer to the local secondary school are good and mean pupils make the move smoothly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have shared most effectively their vision of how the school is to make progress so that all staff play a part in developing the provision. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have had a significant impact in stabilising leadership and management, sharpening practice and raising expectations. Curricular leadership is devolved well among staff teams that include teaching assistants. The governing body is extremely effective and takes a very close interest in the pupils and their learning, having established very good links with classes and their teachers. It is led excellently by the chairperson and there is an exceptionally wide range of expertise among governors. They not only support, but also hold senior leaders robustly to account for the performance of the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved so that all teachers are accountable for the achievement of their classes.

The school promotes equal opportunities and reduces discrimination well. It has gained the Inclusion Award and ensures that no pupil is disadvantaged. Staff go the extra mile, for example in making time and space available in school for Year 5 pupils to practise their musical instrument should it be not possible at home. The monitoring of how different groups of pupils are performing is good. However, the monitoring of opportunities for pupils in the mixed-aged classes is not yet fully embedded and on a few occasions the more-able pupils are not challenged enough. This is why the promotion of equal opportunities is not judged to be outstanding.

Comprehensive risk assessments, child protection measures and the safe recruitment of staff mean safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Pupils feel safe and their parents and carers endorse this view. Partnership with parents and carers is good and there is

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overwhelming support from parents and carers in this aspect of the school's work. The school promotes community cohesion effectively through involvement in projects in the town and by welcoming visitors from the community. It has several links with schools overseas that have a positive impact on pupils' awareness of other cultures. It has plans to develop stronger links with a school in this country that has a more ethnically diverse population.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children join the mixed Reception/Year 1 class after spending a year at the pre-school class in an adjacent classroom. Many start with the expected level of skill in early number work for their age, but with lower-than-expected skills in communication, early reading and writing. They make good progress towards the early learning goals in each area of learning. By the end of the year most are working at the level expected, except for a minority who are slightly below this level in communication, language and literacy. Children become independent in looking after themselves, show interest in activities and help one another well. The quality of teaching is good, giving due attention to the interests of the children. This was very evident when the children were undertaking number activities. The teacher made very effective use of characters in a recent, popular children's film and included water play. The children loved it and learned a lot. Staff use assessments of children's progress to adapt their plans well. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The class teacher is new to the role and has made good progress, building on successful partnerships with parents, carers and other agencies such as the pre-school provision and Sure Start facilities. Workshops for parents and carers have been established with a view to helping them support their children's learning. The classroom and outdoor area provide a safe and stimulating environment for the children, the outdoor area being in the process of 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:	2
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

In terms of the number of questionnaires returned, the response was typical of most inspections of primary schools. Almost all the parents and carers who responded expressed highly positive views of the school. This was also true of a few parents and carers that the team spoke to. They find the school welcoming. They value greatly the work of the school in helping their children to make good progress and understand how to lead a safe and healthy life. They appreciate the work of the headteacher and all staff in helping their children to have a love of learning. A comment typical of several is 'We think this is a fantastic school with teachers who are dedicated to their pupils.' Another was 'The school is making learning exciting and interesting, using topics to inspire my daughter to write.' The inspection evidence endorses these opinions while showing that there is scope for improvement in the attainment of the pupils in English and mathematics. The inspection team considers parents' and carers' positive views are a reflection of the successful partnerships the school has with them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Neston 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	71	13	25	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	79	10	19	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	79	9	17	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	73	11	21	2	4	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	77	10	19	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	73	12	23	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	75	11	21	1	2	1	2
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)	38	73	13	25	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	71	13	25	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	60	18	35	2	4	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	65	15	29	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	38	73	12	23	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	75	11	21	1	2	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



16 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Neston Primary School, Neston, CH64 9RE

It was a great pleasure to inspect your school. You were all extremely friendly and helpful and we enjoyed finding out from you how you are getting on. We particularly enjoyed the meetings we held with the school council and other pupils. On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to share with you what we found.

Your school is providing you with a good education. Your behaviour is good and this means you learn well. You told us bullying is very rare and if it happens, the staff deal with it promptly. Your awareness of how to keep safe is excellent. You take on responsibilities extremely well and we were very impressed with your many roles in school. You make good progress in lessons and, by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, most of you reach the levels expected in English and mathematics. This is because the teaching you receive is good and you work hard. You told us how much you enjoy topic work and activities such as after-school clubs and residential visits. School leaders do a good job and the governing body does an excellent job. The staff take good care of you all so that you feel safe. They make sure you are not put at risk. They have built up valuable links with your parents and carers and with the local secondary school, all to very good effect.

Part of my job is to identify how the school can be even better. There are two improvements for staff to make:

They should help you to do well in English and mathematics by:

- making sure the more able among you are always given challenging work
- having special events and displays of mathematics to stimulate your interest

They should make sure pupils in the same year group but different classes have the same opportunities, for example to write stories.

Please continue to work hard and enjoy school. I send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Carruthers

Lead inspector

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