



Ernest Cookson School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 104744
LEA Liverpool

Inspection number 274866
Inspection dates 21 June 2005
Reporting inspector Adrian Simm

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Type of School | Special | School address | Mill Lane |
| School category | Community Special | | West Derby |
| Age range of pupils | 7 – 14 | | Liverpool |
| | | | L12 7JA |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 0151 220 1874 |
| Number on roll | 41 | Fax number | 0151 252 1238 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr P Trewin |
| Date of previous inspection | February 1999 | Headteacher | Mr S W Roberts |

| Age group | Published | Reference no. |
|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| 7 – 14 | July 2005 | 274866 |

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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of Ernest Cookson School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is for boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small but significant number had problems with very poor attendance at their previous schools. Seventy-three per cent have free school meals, which is very high. Ninety-five per cent of pupils are from white British backgrounds. There are a very small number of pupils from English speaking mixed race backgrounds. A very small number are looked after children. The school offers outreach support to pupils in mainstream schools in the north of Liverpool. A small number of pupils are educated off-site, where they follow basic key-skills and vocational courses rather than the National Curriculum. All pupils have a statement of their special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

The school is effective. This judgement matches the school's own view of itself and that of parents and pupils. It gives good value for money. Teaching and learning are good. Because of this, pupils progress well in their work and improve their behaviour. Teaching could be stronger in helping the pupils to express their thoughts and ideas more clearly. Teachers could also be more effective in helping pupils to have more confidence in trying to spell new words. Improvement since the last inspection is good. This is because the headteacher knows from constantly checking on the success of the school, what is working well and what more needs to be done. Although pupil numbers have reduced in the last few years, staff have kept planned improvements on track despite reductions in the school's budget. This is praiseworthy. Staff have the enthusiasm and skills to build on their current strengths. Prudent financial planning has helped the school build its resources significantly in information and communication technology (ICT) and also to train staff effectively in its use. The headteacher's evaluations of lessons show that staff now need to use ICT more consistently in all subjects.

The school works closely with parents. The learning mentor and other agencies give extra support where it is needed. For example, for those pupils looked after by the local authority. This is a strength of the school. Until recently, attendance in comparison with similar schools was good. Now several pupils with very poor attendance have been admitted to the school. Consequently, attendance rates have fallen. This has set the school new challenges in supporting these pupils and their families.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents to improve pupils' attendance.
- Make learning more exciting and effective for pupils by further building staff's confidence in using ICT more frequently in lessons.
- Ensure pupils are given the time, encouragement and skills to express their thoughts more clearly and to tackle more successfully, the spelling of words that they do not readily know.

Achievement and standards

The inspection data provided by the school points to all pupils achieving well. They make good progress in English, mathematics and science. This is better than the cautious judgement made by the school, which took into account the pupils' standards in relation to mainstream schools. Pupils' achievement against statutory targets set by the school and in relation to individual targets in their

work and behaviour show good progress. The very small number of pupils looked after by the local authority or who do not have a white British background do equally as well. Although overall progress is good, pupils could be braver and more confident in sounding out and spelling words that they are unsure of. Also, pupils are short of the skills necessary when explaining themselves clearly when they are talking to others. For example, the school council had many interesting things to talk about but some pupils found it difficult to express their views and ideas with clarity. Also, pupils do not use their computer skills as fully as they might in other subjects. This limits their progress.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well being

Personal development and well being are good. The school council has influenced improvements in school life such as being successful in requesting the climbing frame and safety flooring on the junior playground. Pupils play together on this equipment calmly and in harmony. Older pupils choose at break times whether to play outside or stay in school to read or play computer games. This is good practice.

The overall level of pupils' attendance is below that of similar schools. This is a recent problem because of a very small number of pupils who started at the school with extremely poor attendance. The school is working very hard to improve individual pupil's attendance. The majority on roll attends well.

In the context of the school, behaviour is good. Instances of poor behaviour happen from time-to-time which, when extreme, are dealt with generally by fixed-term exclusions. During the inspection, pupils showed respect and consideration for others. The school recognises the need to reduce exclusions to a minimum and is working effectively to achieve this. One technique is for pupils to take relaxation therapy in the school's quiet room. During the inspection, pupils responded outstandingly well to this first-rate opportunity.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff celebrate pupils' achievement in work and behaviour throughout the day. Target setting and success sessions mean that pupils know how well they are doing. Pupils respond well to encouragement to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. The school has gained the Healthy School Award and continues to look at ways of providing fresh food. It is explicit in school life that pupils learn to show consideration for others regardless of their gender or background.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. Good support and professional development ensure improved quality. Assessment systems are good in providing information to staff so that they know what the next thing is that each pupil needs to learn. The inspection evidence accords with the headteacher's view that staff have good subject knowledge and ensure consistently that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn and how they should behave; also, that staff-teams work effectively together. This was obvious in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where a support assistant worked separately with a pupil who needed extra help. The headteacher is also right that staff do not use ICT as fully as they could in a broad enough range of lessons and subjects. For example, a lesson in the ICT suite missed huge opportunities to make learning more exciting. A Year 9 pupil drew, cut and pasted shapes into his book in working on 'lines of symmetry' whilst the computers and interactive whiteboard remained unused. Opportunities were also missed in a Year 6 English lesson, when the pupils could have been encouraged to think more for themselves in sounding out words they did not immediately recognise or know how to spell.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The curriculum is well matched to the behavioural and learning needs of all pupils. Statutory requirements are met. Work in classrooms is enriched with additional opportunities to take part in educational visits. For instance, in design and technology and art and design, lessons in other schools using their specialist resources ensure more effective provision than might otherwise be the case. All pupils are encouraged to develop a healthy and safe lifestyle, with courses on citizenship, sex and relationships, and drugs awareness, supported at times by the local police, the school nurse and the learning mentor. There are good links with local football clubs and other local organisations, which are used to spur the pupils on to more acceptable behaviour. Improvements to the school building have provided the pupils with updated facilities. In return, most pupils contribute well to their own school community and respect what is provided for them.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of all the pupils, who trust staff and know who to turn to if they need help. There is very good support for them when they are

upset or troubled. The learning mentor provides valuable input by working closely with the pupils and their families. Monitoring of the pupils' progress and behaviour is well advanced. In pursuit of improvement in pupils' progress, the school realises that an even more precise system of planning for and checking on progress would be beneficial. They are set to introduce this from September 2005. The pupils say that they feel safe in school because instances of bullying and racism are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Good targeted help is provided for those pupils who need extra help with their work or who find it difficult at times to work in larger groups. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and known by staff. Good links with outside agencies support the school's effective and individualised help for the pupils, such as vocational and key skill courses for those pupils educated off site.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides good leadership. His vision and determination to improve the school has been successful. This is despite a reduced budget because of fewer pupils being admitted. Governors have played their part appropriately in financial planning, which is prudent. Hard decisions have been taken, for example, in working without a deputy headteacher for a while. From September 2005, the headteacher has the opportunity to share the responsibilities of leadership with a newly appointed deputy. The school makes effective use of the resources available to improve pupils' achievement and support their behavioural needs.

The school has improved well since the last inspection, particularly in extending the quality and extent of computer equipment, the preciseness of knowing how well pupils are improving and ensuring that the full statutory curriculum is in place. An outreach service to other schools ensures strong links, which are beneficial in giving opportunities for pupils to experience again mainstream education where it is appropriate. The learning mentor's strong links with parents keeps them involved as much as possible in the work of the school. Self-evaluation is effective. It is built upon a wealth of data about pupils' progress in both achievement and behaviour. The key is the headteacher's good knowledge of what works well in lessons and what could be improved. One such example of effective leadership is the training provided for learning support assistants, who are integral to the school's success. As a result, they are more effective in supporting pupils in class and individually. The staff have the determination and the skills to further improve the school's good provision.

Grade: 2

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate. | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

| | |
|--|------------|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | N/A |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The <i>standards</i> reached by learners | 4* |
| How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

| | |
|---|----------|
| How good is the overall personal development and well being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community. | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well being | 2 |

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

| | |
|---|----------|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

*** Standards reached by learners are below the national average but learners achieve well given their capabilities and starting points.**

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

| | |
|--|------------|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes |

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | Delete as appropriate |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily. | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise. | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse. | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health. | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe. | Delete as appropriate |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place. | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism. | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them. | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | Delete as appropriate |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships. | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them. | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well being | Delete as appropriate |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills. | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams. | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form. | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy. | NA |

Suite 13 WLTM
Centre
Moss Lane View
Skelmersdale

T 01695 725000
F 01695 725500
www.cfbt.com



Ernest Cookson School
Mill Lane
West Derby
Liverpool
L12 7JA

22 June 2005

Dear Boys

As you know, I visited you recently to find out how well your teachers are helping you with your learning.

Thank you for being friendly and willing to talk to me. It was very useful to know what you think about your school. I still remember the jokes you told me at lunchtime.

There are some things that are really good about your school. These are:

- The teachers and other adults in your school want you to do really well.
- I think many of you recognise how much staff care and look after you, and, in return, you try hard in your work and behaviour.
- I especially liked the way you have the chance to 'chill out' in the relaxation therapy class. I very nearly joined in with you.
- All of this is possible because your headteacher does his very best to make the school the best he can for you.

I have asked your teachers to improve a few things to make your school even better. These are:

- To help those of you who take more time off school than you should, to improve your attendance.
- To make sure you build your computer skills even more in lessons, which will make your learning more exciting.
- To give you the chance and the confidence to explain your thoughts more clearly and to spell words a little more easily.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help your teachers all you can.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Simm