



Windmill Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111177
Local Authority Halton
Inspection number 288882
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Ravey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Windmill Hill
School category	Community		Runcorn
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire WA7 6QE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 712337
Number on roll (school)	87	Fax number	01928 711038
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Lee
		Headteacher	Mrs E Murdoch
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school that serves a very socially disadvantaged area close to Merseyside. Nearly half its pupils have learning difficulties and over half are entitled to free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. All speak English as their first language. The school is a member of a local Education Action Zone (EAZ) to support its work. It has an Artsmark Gold award and a Healthy Schools award. It has recently had its Investors In People status renewed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Windmill Hill is an outstanding school because it enables its pupils to reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 6 from exceptionally low standards when starting school and to achieve many outstanding outcomes in their personal development. Many pupils start school with significant barriers to achievement and for them to reach broadly average standards and leave the school as confident, well-rounded young people represents outstanding achievement. Everyone in the school plays their part in this success. Expectations are high throughout the school and pupils grow in confidence and self-belief.

The headteacher and deputy head set the tone, demanding the very best of themselves and those round them whilst also being supportive to staff and pupils. This supportiveness pervades the ethos of the school. Care, support and guidance are outstanding. The school nurtures those who come to it with difficulties but also provides strong academic and personal support for all. Parents and carers highlight this care and support as one of the school's many strengths. As a result, pupils show great regard for each other's well being, behave well and have excellent attitudes to school, which they enjoy enormously. They feel safe from bullying – as one pupil remarked, 'We don't get bullied 'cos it's a really nice school' – and they feel that adults in the school are caring and helpful. This all lays down the strong foundations for learning upon which pupils' progress is built. It also helps pupils to understand the need to take care of others and helps them contribute well to the school and wider community.

All staff play a significant part in enabling pupils to succeed. Teaching and learning are outstanding, with teachers consistently expecting the most of pupils and providing them with the means of achieving it. Support staff work very effectively with the very large proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties. The school provides an excellent curriculum. The outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties is matched by the richness of the Foundation Stage curriculum in which young children are made to feel secure and are taught very well. Provision in the arts is of high quality and the school also offers French lessons to all its pupils. As a result, pupils achieve very well not only in literacy and numeracy but also in other aspects of the curriculum, for example in art, where standards are above average.

Standards in writing rose sharply last year due to a successful focus as one of the school's priorities for improvement, although standards in speaking and listening are not yet high enough, with some pupils not speaking clearly, fluently or with confidence. The school is constantly seeking to push back the boundaries of achievement. This is especially true of its approach to helping pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. It is seeking to develop further its pupils' awareness of the importance of fresh vegetables and herbs by developing an allotment for each class so pupils can learn to grow, cook and eat their own vegetables.

All this is pulled together by a headteacher who is utterly committed to the success of the school and its community and who has the drive and expertise to 'make things happen'. She is supported by a dedicated deputy headteacher and staff. The school's

knowledgeable governing body has a good range of skills and keeps a close watch on its work. In the light of such strengths and success, it is hardly surprising that the school has outstanding capacity to improve and that it provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in speaking and listening throughout the school

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards on entry are consistently very low, with hardly any pupils starting school with even average levels of skill. Nearly half have learning or behavioural difficulties or other significant personal and social needs. A few can hardly communicate at all. Contrast this with pupils leaving Year 6 with broadly average standards and the extent of their achievement becomes clear - it is outstanding. The school does very well to get pupils ready for learning, for example through its Nurture Group. The good work, built on solid grounding in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, blossoms in Years 3 to 6, where pupils' performance is exceptional. All groups of pupils in the school achieve very well. Standards at the end of Year 6 rose sharply last year, partly because of the school's successful focus upon improving writing. Only in speaking and listening do standards lag a little behind with some pupils not able to speak fluently or with confidence, especially when making responses in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school puts very strong emphasis on pupils' personal development because many start school with very low personal and social skills and with low self-confidence. Excellent relationships with adults and a 'can do' approach to work helps self-confidence grow and forms a good platform for academic learning. The school is very successful in helping its pupils implement the principles of 'Every Child Matters'. Pupils willingly eat healthy meals, 'cleaning their plates'. They exercise regularly. They enjoy school immensely and can't wait to get there, a sentiment captured by one pupil who remarked, 'In the holidays, it's boring!' The standards pupils reach and their very positive attitudes are good preparation for adult life.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. They make particularly good response to the many opportunities to develop cultural awareness. Despite a significant minority of pupils having behavioural difficulties, behaviour is good. This reflects the high quality of relationships and staff's very good management of behaviour. Attendance is at the national average level but this represents very good achievement for a school in an area of such disadvantage.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding because of the consistently strong impact it has on pupils' learning throughout the school. Teachers are well organised and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They prepare work that matches pupils' learning needs and this results in very good progress. The work of support staff has a significant impact, especially for pupils with learning difficulties. All this is underpinned by excellent relationships that motivate pupils, making them keen to learn. 'Teachers are there to boost your confidence', said one boy, capturing well how staff develop personal and social as well as academic skills. Good assessment procedures help teachers to know how well pupils are doing. Good use of learning targets means that pupils know what to do to improve. This process is well established - as one pupil put it, 'Every time we start to work, the teacher says; 'Look at your targets first!''

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

From the Foundation Stage onwards, the curriculum is exciting and vibrant. Despite a major need to improve skills in literacy, numeracy and personal development, the curriculum is far from narrowly based. Excellent provision in the arts results in very good achievement. All pupils learn French regularly. Visiting sports coaches ensure that provision for physical education is of good quality. The outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties is enhanced by the work of visiting specialists, including the partnership forged with the local EAZ. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm of the work of visiting dancers and artists and are clearly excited by the opportunities these present. The curriculum succeeds in meeting the needs of all learners.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A strong quality of care permeates this school. Pupils in need are supported systematically, sensitively and very effectively. The work of the Nurture Group with younger pupils is a great example of this, allowing pupils space and time to gain confidence in a small group whilst keeping them part of their class. The small number on roll works to the school's advantage in staff being able to know each pupil very well and to provide well-tailored individual support for them. Strong procedures are in place for child protection and for vetting staff. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken. Good quality academic guidance complements outstanding pastoral support, with teachers setting clear and attainable targets for improvement and conscientiously checking that these are addressed successfully by pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher sets exactly the right direction for the school and inspires others to follow. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve despite their low starting points and the problems many face. Her vision is one of high achievement academically and pastorally. All staff share this and achieve great success in bringing it into being. Every child is valued equally and everything possible is done to help get the best out of each. Very good procedures for monitoring teaching and learning help keep the quality of provision high and as a result pupils achieve very well. Close analysis of data leads to a very accurate view of performance (although the school's view of itself is a little cautious at times) and this in turn leads to effective action to secure improvements. The governing body cares deeply about the school, its pupils and their families. It is knowledgeable and has the expertise to check how well the school is achieving its goals.

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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
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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 the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my two days with you. Yours is an outstanding school and you clearly play a big part in making it so.

Here are some of your school's major strengths

- You make outstanding progress to reach the standards expected of you in English, mathematics and science when you leave at the end of Year 6.
- You clearly enjoy school very much and you work very hard
- Your teachers and other staff do outstandingly well in helping you to learn and to gain confidence, as you told me
- Everyone in your school cares and helps each other - and, as you say, you all get on so well together
- You try very hard to live a healthy lifestyle - and you succeed
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher lead your school outstandingly well and make sure you have lots of interesting things to help you learn.

Of course, you play an important part in all this through your very good attitudes to school. One thing you can help to improve is how you speak in lessons. You see, I think many of you could speak more clearly and more confidently when giving replies or in discussions such as those you have in 'Circle Time' and I've asked your teachers to help you do this. I'm very confident you'll succeed!

All the very best for the future