



Northcote Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104564
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 300470
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Gina White HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cavendish Drive
School category	Community		Walton, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L9 1HW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 284 1919
Number on roll (school)	344	Fax number	0151 284 1920
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Lawless
		Headteacher	Mr Roy Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	10–11 January 2007	300470

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average sized school is situated in an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Over half the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is higher than that found nationally, but of these relatively few, 1.1%, have statements of special educational needs. This is slightly lower than average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number come from minority ethnic groups and three pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school is part of the Walton Children's Centre that provides support for pupils aged 0 to 11 in partnership with other agencies.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Northcote Primary is a satisfactory school that is improving. Since its last inspection twelve months ago the school has worked successfully to tackle inadequacies in achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership and management. These key aspects of the school are now satisfactory. Strengths in pupils' personal development and well-being and provision for their care have been maintained and aspects of them improved.

In the last year the school has established effective systems to track the progress of individuals and specific groups of learners in English, mathematics and science. As a result teachers are better placed to know how well pupils are doing, to identify gaps in their learning and take remedial action. However, tracking and regular assessment has yet to be fully implemented to identify how well pupils are doing in all subjects and aspects of the curriculum.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and learning. They make rapid progress from their low starting points on entry and they continue to do well in Years 1 and 2 and reach the standards expected for their age by the end of Key Stage 1. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 has improved since the previous inspection and in the lessons observed was never less than satisfactory. As a consequence, pupils are starting to overcome the legacy of inadequate teaching and they make satisfactory progress. Their achievement is starting to rise across the key stage and is reflected in the higher standards and better achievement of Year 6 pupils in the 2006 tests. However, standards in English remain too low.

Pupils' personal development is good and provision for their well-being, care and guidance are strengths of the school. Pupils are happy and enjoy school. Teachers and learning support staff know pupils very well, they constantly encourage them to try their best and offer praise at every opportunity. As a result, pupils say this gives them the confidence to tackle new and unfamiliar tasks. Adults who work in the school are skilled at caring for pupils' social and emotional well-being. Consequently pupils say they feel valued and well cared for. Parents too feel their children are well looked after and their positive responses in the inspection survey demonstrate their high regard for the school and the work it is doing. Partnership is satisfactory: pupils are beginning to benefit from a breakfast club provided through the nearby children's centre. Opportunities for pupils and families to benefit further from this resource have yet to be explored.

The school has struggled to improve attendance and, despite the use of a wide range of strategies, it is inadequate and has fallen further over the last year to 91.1%. Much of the absence is due to pupils taking holidays in term time. Signs of a recent improvement in attendance during the autumn term are evident.

Leaders and managers have satisfactorily implemented improvement plans since the last inspection. The restructuring of staffing and of some classes, clearer policy development, greater clarity about expectations of pupils' progress and better tracking and regular monitoring underpin the improvements in the school. Much of the

improvement is recent and the school's evaluation of its performance remains, as it did in the last inspection, more favourable than pupils' overall standards and achievement warrant. Nonetheless, self-evaluation is improving as a result of a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating and it is now satisfactory. Good practice is developing in individual teachers' work, but procedures to regularly share this throughout the school so as to eliminate inconsistencies in teaching and learning and to improve practice to the level of the best are underdeveloped.

The school provides satisfactory value for money and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Identify and share good practice in teaching and learning consistently across the school.
- Extend systems to track the progress of individual and specific groups of learners to identify how well they are doing in all subjects and aspects of the curriculum.
- Raise standards in English.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with low attainment but respond well to clearly structured learning activities and tasks and this helps them to get off to a flying start. By the end of the Foundation Stage almost all reach the national expectations for their age and this represents good progress given their low starting points.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and attainment by the end of the key stage is in line with the national average. The most recent results in 2006 show a positive picture has been maintained in reading, writing and mathematics and more pupils are achieving the higher levels in reading.

Pupils' progress slows noticeably in Key Stage 2 and standards in 2005 were significantly below national expectations. In the last 12 months the school's investment in better preparation, revision and regular testing contributed to a major improvement in results in 2006, particularly in science and mathematics and increases in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5. Standards have improved although they remain below national averages. Such strategies have proved less effective in English, where the legacy of inadequate teaching in the past is proving more resistant to bringing about swift change. Year 6 pupils achieved their targets in mathematics. Despite the overall improvement in science, performance here and in English, where it is significantly below national standards, fell short of the school's 2006 targets.

Regular frequent checks are now made on pupils' progress in maths, science and English. School assessment information shows that most pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making satisfactory or better progress. Year 2 pupils are making faster progress. These checks also identify significant numbers of lower attaining pupils, many with LDD, who are not doing as well as they could. Actions are under way to tackle this issue.

Sharper systems to identify smaller steps in progress are being introduced and inspectors' visits to lessons show that these pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and moral conscience: pupils say 'when you do something wrong you know in your heart it is'. They are respectful, polite and kind with each other and adults. Pupils take pride in their school and follow the code of conduct. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Promotion of healthy lifestyles is good: most pupils eat and drink sensibly whilst at school and the range of opportunities for them to engage in sporting activities has increased since the last inspection. Although pupils respect each others' differences and bullying is rare, actions to develop and prepare them to participate in a multicultural society are limited.

There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in the school so as to contribute to the development of their workplace skills; however, the low levels of attainment in literacy limit the impact of this work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage because the adults who work with them have a good understanding of how young children learn. They plan together carefully, taking account of children's particular needs. This ensures that they have the guidance and attention they need to do well.

Good relationships, and teachers' use of praise and encouragement, are evident in all lessons. These are key factors which are helping to improve pupils' self-esteem and confidence so they are much more willing to 'have a go' at new tasks, offer opinions and share ideas. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for lower attaining pupils and those with LDD and this helps them to make satisfactory progress in lessons.

The best lessons include a good range of varied activities: the pace is brisk and lively. Pupils show enthusiasm for the task, try their best and this produces good learning. Teachers explain new concepts and ideas well. Question and answer sessions are sometimes used effectively to extend pupils' learning as well as to challenge and deepen their understanding, but this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Interactive whiteboards are used well to capture pupils' attention and engage them in the lesson. This helps to drive their learning forward rapidly.

The school has continued to improve its systems to assess what pupils are capable of and track how well they are doing. As a result teachers have a clear picture of where pupils are up to. But this information is not used well enough to plan and adjust

teaching so that work precisely matches the needs of all pupils; this holds back the pace of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Good outdoor play facilities are used well to promote and develop pupils' physical development in the Foundation Stage. This emphasis on physical development is a key feature throughout the school and pupils enjoy and participate in an extensive range of sports and extra curricular activities. The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to learn Spanish have been introduced and the school has maintained its emphasis on enriching the curriculum through trips, visitors, arts and cultural activities. After-school reading clubs have proved popular and useful to pupils. Teachers and support staff report that pupils' skills in reading and their love of books are increasing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Improvements to the school provide a safe and secure environment for learners. Procedures for child protection and to safeguard learners meet requirements. Good induction arrangements help the youngest pupils and those who start part way through the year to settle quickly into school routines. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English receive good support.

A good start has been made to do more to meet the needs of pupils with LDD. Robust systems have been put in place to monitor the progress and the support provided for this group of pupils. The school acknowledges that more needs to be done to ensure teachers plan work and activities that cater more precisely for these pupils, to ensure that they all achieve as much as they are capable of. The school has continued to develop its procedures to track the progress individuals make. This information is generally used well by teachers to give guidance to pupils, for example when marking work and setting learning targets. But the best practice is not yet shared, so that pupils in all classes can have a very clear understanding what they need to do to improve their work or reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection. The experience and energy of the relatively new deputy headteacher has enhanced the senior management team and contributed to better coordination of developments. Managers, staff and governors share a commitment to improvement. Staff accept the regular checking of teaching and learning and they are starting to make whatever changes to their practice may be needed in order to raise standards. Systems to regularly

share good practice throughout the school to further promote improvement are underdeveloped.

Middle leaders are clear about what is expected of them. They have responded well to extensive training and support by external consultants and are implementing more robust systems to monitor the areas of work they are responsible for. More challenging school targets have been set and the school is now better placed to analyse and use performance data.

A clear and focused improvement plan has led to the establishment of regular systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. However, these systems have yet to extend to encompass other important areas of the school's work to better support accurate school self-evaluation.

Governance has improved and is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and are regularly informed of developments. The project group, developed by the local authority to support the school, has played an effective role in this respect. Consequently governors are better placed to exercise their responsibility for holding the school to account.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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
The attendance of learners	4
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 welcoming myself and my colleagues during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you. We think your school is improving and it gives you a satisfactory education.

The best things about your school are:

- teaching and learning are improving and more of you are making better progress and achieving well
- many of you enjoy and try your best in lessons and your behaviour is good
- staff look after and support you well so that you are confident to try new tasks
- you participate well in the many clubs and sporting activities.

Your teachers work hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, the inspection team has asked if they could:

- always share good ideas so that all teaching is as good as the best
- track the progress you make so that they know how well you are doing in all your subjects
- raise standards in English
- raise attendance. Each of you can help by attending more regularly and by not taking holidays in term time.

Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.