

Knotty Ash Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104550
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308626
Inspection date	21 November 2007
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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Comerford
Headteacher	Mr Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Thomas Lane Liverpool Merseyside L14 5NX
Telephone number	0151 2284222
Fax number	0151 2300401

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: provision for pupils with hearing impairment, the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum, including the Foundation Stage, and the leadership and management of the school. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, discussions with members of the senior leadership team as well as the chair of governors, pupils, some parents and other staff, and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils in this average-sized primary school are of White British heritage. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average overall. The proportion with statements of special educational need is above average and includes pupils with hearing impairment or profound deafness, for whom the school is specifically resourced. The school holds the Chartermark, the local authority's Inclusion Chartermark (Advanced level), the Healthy Schools, Basic Skills, Investors in People, Artsmark and Sport England Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils and has outstanding features. An exceptional aspect is the commitment of staff at all levels to promoting the potential of all pupils, whatever their needs, and to including everyone in the opportunities the school provides. The school works on the principle of 'total communication' and all staff and pupils develop excellent skills of speaking, listening and signing so that relationships are strong and everyone's well-being is taken into account. An impressive example is the Signing Choir, established several years ago, which has past and present pupils aged 7 to 17 and is acclaimed as an ambassador for the city and for performances further afield. Activities such as this promote the personal development of pupils exceptionally well and are highly valued by parents.

Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is good. From levels of attainment that are below average on entry to the Nursery, pupils reach standards in Year 6 that range between average and above average. This is achieved through good teaching, rigorous monitoring of how well pupils are doing and highly effective pastoral care. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates and some profoundly deaf pupils make outstanding progress thanks to the exceptionally high quality support they receive. They frequently reach the standards expected of all pupils by Year 6, especially in mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school very much, behave exceptionally well and develop an excellent awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit lifestyle. They speak enthusiastically about lessons, reporting that teachers make learning interesting through an emphasis on research, games and puzzles. Pupils clearly take a full part in helping to make the school an enjoyable and safe place to be, for instance, through their roles as school councillors, play leaders and monitors. Levels of attendance are in line with the average for primary schools nationally and the school is very effective in reaching and exceeding the targets it sets for good attendance. The pupils develop the essential skills of cooperative behaviour, empathy with others, independence in learning and punctuality, which help them when they begin secondary education.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is good with outstanding features. Throughout the school, classrooms, corridors and shared spaces are exciting and interesting places for pupils to experience. In addition, outdoor areas are equipped to provide further spaces for learning and this vibrancy is at the centre of the pupils' learning. It encourages all pupils to have self-confidence, high expectations and a fierce pride in their accomplishments. Across the whole age range, pupils are encouraged to immerse themselves in exploring through imaginative play and research, for example, in the well-equipped shared areas between classrooms. Teaching assistants make a big contribution to all aspects of pupils' learning. Specialist staff for the deaf use their skills to help not only pupils with hearing impairment but others, especially younger children who have limited language. The curriculum has an excellent international dimension that the school has developed over a number of years. The school is currently introducing a further dimension which focuses on tracking the continuous development of skills such as thinking and decision making. There are exciting themed days and weeks in which topics are explored with a wide range of events, trips and activities outside lessons. The school is also planning the introduction of Spanish, a language chosen after consultation with parents, pupils and associated high schools.

The care, guidance and support provided for all pupils are excellent. Staff are very well trained for their roles. Counsellors supporting vulnerable pupils and their families, for example, are highly effective in the care they provide. The school has established 'sensory' rooms to provide pupils with opportunities for quiet reflection and individual support. Partnerships with other schools, parents and external agencies are outstanding and have significant benefit for pupils. Parents describe the staff as being like an extended family and find them warm and welcoming. They are confident their views are taken into account and the overwhelming majority would endorse the view of one who wrote, 'I cannot praise this school highly enough.' Any concerns raised by parents are dealt with quickly. The school has developed very good systems to keep track of pupils' achievement. This year, staff are building on these systems very effectively to identify any signs of underachievement quickly and then intervene with group work and one-to-one support. These procedures are also used very well to identify gifted and talented pupils and provide additional challenge to the work they do.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher has made an outstanding start since his appointment in January of this year. Having carefully taken stock of the existing provision, which was already of a high calibre, he consulted with staff, governors, parents, pupils, associated schools and agencies on his vision for the future of the school. This includes promoting the extended school day, developing close links with key partners such as a local Children's Centre and improving the opportunities for learning for all pupils. The full impact of this work is yet to be felt, but the support of all partners in these ventures is already assured. The personnel on the newly enlarged senior leadership team have considerable leadership and management skills and enjoy the support of an efficient governing body that is exceptionally well led by the chair person. Building on these strengths through the school's strong commitment to professional development and in-service training is the next step in this process.

School self-evaluation is effective and involves governors and staff at all levels. The school's views match closely the judgements of inspectors, though it has been modest in its view of the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and its capacity to improve, both of which are outstanding. Since the last inspection and during the changes at senior leadership level, the school has continued to thrive and looks forward to the future with confidence. It provides good value for money overall and excellent value in relation to the achievement of pupils with hearing impairment.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children quickly and happily settle into both the Nursery and Reception classes. They are extremely well cared for. The Foundation Stage leader with the staff manages this phase exceptionally well. Excellent relationships have been built with parents who say they get very good information about the curriculum. A good number of them attend the high quality courses offered that put them in a very good position to help their children learn at home. There is excellent teamwork among the staff. Because they consistently hold high expectations, the needs of children are fully met. The profoundly deaf children are taught and included particularly well in all activities. As a result, children are happy and become confident learners. Maximum use is made of the exceptionally good accommodation and resources for the indoor and outdoor curriculum. As a result of the rich curriculum provision, children enjoy investigating the new challenges offered. The children very effectively take some responsibility in choosing activities, marking their own 'register' and tidying up. They learn how to stay healthy, deciding when to have their milk and fruit and vegetables, knowing that

they are healthy foods. Considerable emphasis is placed on the development of children's language, social and mathematical skills where children need most help and where the most progress is made. Because the learning environment is vibrant and the quality of teaching is good and at times outstanding, the children make exceptionally good progress. Most are working securely within the expected learning goals by the end of their Reception year and a significant minority exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the skills of the new leadership team to raise standards further.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	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.

Annex A

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

Inspection of Knotty Ash Primary School, Liverpool L14 5NX

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now I would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

Yours is a good school, for instance:

- the staff take excellent care of you all and teach you well
- your attitude to lessons is excellent, you enjoy school and behave exceptionally well
- you look out for one another and help each other exceptionally well and this is helped by the way you all learn to sign as well as speak, listen, read and write
- the school's signing choir is very impressive
- you are doing well in English, mathematics and science and making good progress
- the staff have excellent links with your parents, other schools and agencies to help you to achieve your best
- the children in the Nursery and Reception class do very well because of the excellent work of the staff
- your new headteacher has made an outstanding start since he was appointed in January 2007, and has great plans for the school.

Now the new senior leaders of the school need to build on the excellent start they have made to make sure you all do as well as you can. I am sure you all will!