

Greasby Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105022
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308744
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Shepherd
Headteacher	Mrs J Hall
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Barker Lane Greasby Wirral Merseyside CH49 3NX
Telephone number	0151 677 2830
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Age group	5–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Many pupils who attend this smaller than average school come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British heritage and a tiny proportion speak English as an additional language. Far fewer than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or are entitled to claim a free school meal. The school has a number of awards that include the Activemark, the National Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People status. The headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which through some very effective teaching in Years 1 and 2 enables pupils to attain high standards by the time they move to the junior school. Pupils' behaviour is good and most enjoy lessons. In Years 1 and 2, the rich and diverse curriculum provides them with many interesting activities and experiences. Pupils are well cared for and supported. In Years 1 and 2, pupils often make very good progress. However, the limited curriculum in the Reception classes means that children in the Foundation Stage achieve satisfactorily but no better.

Aspects of pupils' personal development are very good. They enjoy responsibility and contribute well to the school community. This is particularly evident in the playground where the 'active play' sessions, organised by a teaching assistant but implemented by Year 2 pupils, contributes significantly to the peaceful and cooperative atmosphere during lunchtime. These sessions also add a considerable boost to pupils' healthy lifestyles. The school council is proud of its influence on the improvements in the healthier lunch menus. An aspect of pupils' personal development that is less good is the lack of opportunity they have to take responsibility for their own learning and to regularly problem solve and investigate in groups.

The relatively new headteacher has quickly identified areas that need to improve. She has a realistic view of the school's performance, though slightly overestimating one or two aspects in the self-evaluation. These are reflected in the key areas for improvement. The headteacher has rigorously reviewed the school's provision and has produced a concise, clear plan for improvement. The staff appreciate her enthusiasm, vision, high expectations and inclusive management style. As a result, they have responded by working positively both individually and in teams to bring about some of the necessary improvements. Leaders and managers ensure that pupils are well cared for and many parents comment positively on this aspect of the school's work.

Pupils enjoy learning most when teachers use imaginative resources and set challenging targets for them in lessons. They respond well to computer programs transmitted through interactive whiteboards. When teachers use more direct methods based on giving information, pupils' interest is not as intense. The school has successfully improved in those areas identified as issues in the last report. Given the clarity of the headteacher's and other leaders' understanding of what the school needs to do better, the commitment of all the staff and a supportive and challenging governing body, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. On entry to the Reception classes most children have skills above the expected starting point for their age. There are valuable links with parents and as a result of thorough induction arrangements children settle quickly. They feel happy and safe in their new environment. Children treat each other and adults with respect. Teaching assistants are a very valuable part of the teaching team and effective procedures are in place to ensure that children's care and welfare are a high priority. Staff appropriately use discussion and questions to stimulate children's learning. Strong emphasis is placed on children's good personal development. However, teachers' plans and checks on children's progress do not always take account of their individual needs. The curriculum has some weaknesses. For

example, there are insufficient opportunities for children to initiate and take responsibility for their own learning. Children's freedom to move around the Foundation Stage room and access to the outside area is limited. Children make satisfactory progress and by the end of Reception their skills remain at levels above those expected for children of their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum in the Foundation Stage fully meets children's needs and that they achieve as well the pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, to work in teams and to investigate and problem solve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with above expected skills, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in their mathematical development. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with above expected standards in all areas of their learning apart from in their creative development, which is below expectations.

Because pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught consistently well, they develop very good basic skills. Data shows that in the teacher assessments in Year 2, pupils attained exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics over the last five years. This represents very good achievement in Years 1 and 2. However, given only satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, pupils' overall achievement is good. In Years 1 and 2, a much higher proportion of pupils than normally found reach higher than nationally expected levels. This is particularly evident in reading and writing. Boys' writing is particularly strong compared with the standards boys attain nationally. Effective interventions enable pupils who are at risk of falling behind to catch up and most reach expected levels in Year 2. Those very few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good strides in their understanding and use of English which enables them to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils think that school is good because as many said, 'We like learning in school.' Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their cultural development is outstanding. For example, during the inspection, Year 2 children celebrated the Chinese New Year, by singing in Mandarin, making Chinese lanterns and playing Chinese musical instruments. They form good relationships with each other and adults and show confidence and a willingness to engage in conversation with visitors. All pupils work and play well together. Behaviour is good overall. However, a few pupils do not always listen as well as they should and are reluctant to wait their turn to answer questions. This means that personal development is good rather than outstanding as the school judges.

Pupils know how to live healthily and they enjoy the nutritious meals and snacks available. Attendance and punctuality are good. All pupils willingly take responsibility for others. However, they do not always take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils raise money for various charities and this awareness of others' needs along with their good acquisition of basic skills shows that they are well prepared for their future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Some of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 is outstanding and such quality contributes well to pupils' high standards. In the Reception classes, teaching is satisfactory overall.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy learning and respond well to lessons where teaching is imaginative and briskly paced. In these lessons, pupils are challenged and there are clear objectives set for them to achieve. This was well exemplified in a Year 2 lesson in which pupils were required to find 'wow' words (adjectives) to describe a dragon that had been posted to the school in a large crate. This engendered a lot of excitement and a real buzz in the classroom. Pupils first 'brainstormed' suitable words to describe the dragon and then used a thesaurus to research more unusual adjectives. Throughout Years 1 and 2, teachers impart their good subject knowledge effectively to promote pupils' excellent basic skills. They are less successful in consistently providing pupils with opportunities to work in teams to solve problems and to carry out investigations, or to evaluate their own and others' work. Teaching assistants are well deployed to teach intervention programmes and to promote pupils' social skills. As a result, pupils who find learning more difficult or have trouble fitting in are given valuable and effective help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. While much of the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is outstanding, there are shortcomings in the curriculum for Reception children. Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a logical manner. The curriculum supports their personal development well. It is enriched through modern foreign language lessons for all pupils: French in Reception class, German in Year 1 and Mandarin in Year 2. Pupils have good opportunities to visit places of interest and take part in workshops, all of which are closely linked to their work. Visitors and out-of-school activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment and support their cultural development extremely well. The school has a strong music tradition. This was exemplified by pupils' wonderful singing in an assembly. Everyone has the opportunity to become involved in after-school activities and these are well supported. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all the pupils. Children trust staff and turn to them if they are troubled or upset, confident they will receive good support. Parents and carers find staff very approachable and they work closely with staff to support their children's education. However, arrangements to check on and track pupils' academic progress and personal development across the school are at an early stage of development and have yet to fully impact on pupils' learning. The support for pupils who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support pupils' learning needs. Procedures are in place to promote child protection. Health and safety arrangements are up-to-date, including risk assessments, to ensure that pupils work and play in safety.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The relatively new headteacher has already made a positive impact with parents, pupils, staff and governors. A result is that most parents feel welcome and well informed about the school's work and their children's progress. Some parents of children in the Reception classes would like more frequent updates on the progress their children are making. Inspectors have some sympathy with this view.

There are effective partnerships with other schools, colleges and with the local community which enhance pupils' achievements, their personal development and the richness of their curriculum in Key Stage 1. The close link with the main feeder junior school, for example, makes the transfer for Year 2 pupils comfortable for both the children and their parents. Also enhanced by this close partnership are pupils' musical skills and experiences. Leaders are increasingly rigorous about checking on the school's performance and this has led to improvements in assessments and in the way in which pupils are taught. For example, teachers now provide more relevant opportunities for speaking and writing. The deputy headteacher makes a valuable contribution to the further development of literacy and to pupils' musical education. Subject leaders are still developing their role in ensuring improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Governors fulfil their roles effectively. They have managed the budgetary implications of declining numbers well to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged. The governing body is also keenly aware of the school's performance and does not hesitate to challenge school managers to ensure the best possible provision and to continue to provide good value for money.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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?	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.

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	2
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	2
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 Greasby Infant School, Wirral, CH49 3NX

I would like to say thank you very much for the friendly way in which you welcomed me and the other inspector to your school when we visited recently. You were kind to us and had plenty to tell us about your school. There were lots of things that we thought were super and a few we thought need to be better.

The children in Years 1 and 2 do very well with their learning, especially their reading, writing and mathematics. There are lots of exciting things going on! The work you were doing about the Chinese New Year was really good. You all seemed to thoroughly enjoy it and produced some lovely lanterns and Mandarin writing. It's great that you learn a different language in each year. You all sing very tunefully. Most of you are well taught. The adults in the school look after you well. They also know what to do to make the school even better.

I have asked your headteacher and teachers to do two things to help with this. Firstly, I have asked that the children in the F2 classes have more choice about the things they do during the day and for them to do better with their learning. I have also asked that all your teachers give you more chances to work together to solve problems and to find things out for yourselves.

You can help by working really hard. Some of you also need to listen to your teachers more carefully during lessons and to let other children have a turn at answering questions.

I wish you all well and hope that you carry on really enjoying school.