

Neston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110987
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310473
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brenda Mooney
Headteacher	Mrs K Takashima
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2006
School address	Burton Road Neston Merseyside CH64 9RE
Telephone number	0151 3361662
Fax number	0151 3530992

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Inspection number	310473

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school draws its pupils from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. When the school was inspected in September 2006, it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues related to pupils' standards and achievement, teaching and aspects of subject leadership. It was subsequently visited in May 2007 when it was judged to be making good progress. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number have English as an additional language. A broadly average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need. Greater than average proportions of pupils leave or join the school at other than the usual times and overall numbers are falling. The school is involved in the Comenius Project, working with schools in other countries. It holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Schools Extra award for provision of extra-curricular activities. There have been many changes in staffing over the last two years. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education and is improving. Good progress has been made in dealing with the issues of the last inspection. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards and make satisfactory progress through the school. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 results were broadly average overall. They were not as high in writing as in reading or mathematics but were better than in the previous year. Improvement in the standard of writing reflects the positive impact of the school's drive for improvement. It forms part of a picture of improving standards and achievement. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average and indicate satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' starting points. The school met its challenging targets and the proportions of pupils reaching higher than expected levels in English, mathematics and science were above average. This indicates that the decline in standards has been halted. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards and achievement continue to improve.

Pupils' good personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, benefits from the many enrichment activities that the school provides. For example, pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world is increased by links with schools in Italy and Spain through the Comenius Project. Pupils enjoy coming to school and often show great enthusiasm in lessons. They make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Most pupils are well behaved and show that they know the difference between right and wrong. They respond well to the warm relationships that are evident throughout the school.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is improving as a result of the programme of monitoring and support introduced by the headteacher. A key factor in the improving progress of pupils throughout the school is the effective way that teachers and classroom assistants work together to plan work and support pupils' learning. Some excellent teaching leads to rapid progress and shows what can be done when lessons are planned to meet pupils' needs fully. However, there remain inconsistencies in the use of assessment to match work to individual needs and thus promote progress. Similarly, targets are not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs and reviews are not always frequent enough to raise pupils' achievement further and help them make faster progress. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics are not consistently identified in planning by subject leaders.

The school cares for its pupils well. An effective network of support provided by the learning mentor, teachers and teaching assistants ensures that the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met effectively to ensure that they benefit from all the school has to offer.

Since her appointment the headteacher has provided strong leadership that has succeeded in turning the school around. Ably supported by the seconded deputy headteacher, she has translated an unequivocal vision for improvement into action through a programme of monitoring and evaluation linked to staff development. The school's plans for raising standards and achievement are not yet consistently matched by the way that subject leaders monitor and lead work in their areas of responsibility. Links between different areas of learning are not consistently

identified in planning so that opportunities are missed to help pupils discover how learning in one subject can be related to another.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Most children entering the Reception/Year 1 classes come from a preschool which has recently moved into the school building. Good links are developing between the preschool and Reception which enable children to settle in well. When children enter the Reception classes they have levels of learning that are below expectations for their age, particularly in writing, reading and personal, social and emotional development. They make satisfactory progress overall towards the early learning goals so that when they enter Year 1 many children have reached national expectations for their age. However, a substantial minority are still below expected levels particularly in writing. Children's behaviour and enjoyment of learning are good. The quality of teaching and learning, though never less than satisfactory, is inconsistent. Some is outstanding and shows the good progress that children can make when they are fully challenged and motivated. Good assessment data is available, but the use to which it is put to guide planning is inconsistent in taking account of children's diverse needs. Staff have very good relationships with the children and each other. Teaching assistants work well as part of a team and make a good contribution to children's learning and development. The school acknowledges that the facilities for outdoor learning and play are not good enough and has plans for improvement. There is no covered area to permit outdoor play when the weather is wet. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed so that provision is improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that subject leaders play a full and consistent part in leading and monitoring performance in their subjects in order to raise standards further and improve progress.
- Improve the way that teachers use assessment information, target setting and review to guide planning, match work to pupils' learning needs and promote at least good progress.
- Identify and plan opportunities to support the development of literacy and numeracy in subjects across the curriculum.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The continued improvement in achievement and standards demonstrates the positive impact of measures taken by the school's management to deal with the causes of lower than expected attainment noted in the last inspection report. Current standards are broadly average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall as they move through the school and for some it is good. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups because of the inclusive way that the school promotes the progress of all pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well so that many make better than expected progress in relation to their targets. Pupils at an early stage of learning English settle into the school well and make good progress as a result of the sensitive support they receive from teachers and classroom assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and to adults. They know how to stay safe and they feel safe in the school. Although some parents expressed concerns about bullying, pupils are confident that any reported incident will be dealt with promptly and effectively. They are well aware of what to do should any problem arise. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and show it by making healthy choices at lunchtime. Pupils readily take on responsibility. Older pupils act as road safety and recycling officers and support younger pupils well at playtimes by acting as helpers and playleaders. Pupils believe that they have a voice that is heard in the school. For example, the active school council has been involved in improving playground facilities. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through their fund-raising activities. They show awareness of the needs of others by participation in events such as Operation Christmas Child. They work well cooperatively and independently. The school is striving hard to improve attendance by continuing to work with a small number of families who do not always ensure that their children attend as regularly as they should.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well in lessons because relationships are good and the majority of teachers have clear expectations of work and behaviour. Teachers make many lessons fun so that pupils enjoy learning. A good example is the way that older pupils have been helped to an enthusiastic understanding of Macbeth by imaginative approaches to learning. Occasionally teachers try to do too much for pupils, lesson introductions are too long so that interest and pace slacken. Planning does not consistently take account of pupils' needs so that there are times when higher-attaining pupils find the work too easy and are not stretched. In contrast, there is some outstanding practice in the school where lessons move at a cracking pace with frequent changes in activity to maintain interest and concentration. A feature of these lessons is the way that teachers build upon pupils' replies to questions to stretch them and make them think. The quality of marking varies and teachers' comments do not always have sufficient depth to enable pupils to make the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a broad range of activities that meets pupils' needs and interests. Links between subjects to help pupils understand their learning better are not fully developed. A review of the curriculum to establish better links is part of the school's improvement planning. The school acknowledges that opportunities are missed to promote literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum because these opportunities are not yet planned consistently. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to discover interests and talents. These activities contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Residential visits enhance pupils' personal development. Carefully planned personal social and health education has a good focus on healthy eating and lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a caring school and teachers are skilled at building the confidence and self-esteem of pupils. Pastoral support is good. Good relationships are evident between all members of the school community. Procedures to promote child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety and to reduce risk are in place. The school has good links with external agencies to support pupils. An effective behaviour policy ensures that pupils behave responsibly. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel that they are kept well informed. Good information is made available to parents through the school website and regular newsletters. Pupils usually know their targets, but these are not always focused sharply enough and they are not reviewed often enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The key to the school's recent improvement lies in the headteacher's determination to ensure that pupils reach the highest standards of which they are capable. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and used well to identify what needs doing to raise standards. The impact of initiatives is carefully considered and changes made as necessary. The good progress in dealing with the issues from the last inspection, noted in the recent monitoring visit, has continued. The result is that the school now has a good platform on which to build further improvement. The roles of subject leaders have been clearly defined to help improve teaching and learning and to increase accountability for standards and achievement. However, there remain inconsistencies in the rigour with which this work is implemented, particularly in evaluating quality, planning links between subjects and in identifying opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Governance is good. The governing body is well informed and aware of the challenges that face the school. Governors are accustomed to asking the difficult questions that hold the school to account for its performance. Together with the headteacher, the governing body has taken some hard decisions to secure improvement, the success of which is to be seen in rising standards.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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?	3
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?	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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the way that you welcomed us into your school. We are particularly grateful to those of you who told us about your life and work in the school. We really enjoyed hearing from Year 6 pupils about their parts in Macbeth and how well they understood the characters in the play. We were impressed by your good manners and behaviour. We agree with you that the school is a safe and happy place where everyone can enjoy learning.

These are the best things about the school.

- It is improving so that your standards and achievement are rising.
- You form good relationships with all others in the school, including visitors like ourselves.
- You know that it is important to have a healthy way of living. We could see at lunchtime that you take this seriously.
- Everyone in the school cares for you all well so that you get help with any difficulties.
- You behave well and get on well together. We particularly liked the way older pupils help the younger ones at playtimes.
- There are lots of extra activities that you enjoy.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school an even better place to learn. These are:

- to make sure that work in all subjects is checked carefully so that you make quicker progress and reach higher standards
- to use your targets and the information teachers collect about your progress to make sure that you are given work that challenges you; you can help by making sure that you know your targets and what to do to reach them
- to find and plan ways to improve your literacy and use of number in all your subjects.

We wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to help make your school an even better place to learn.