

Stockton Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110996
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310475
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela Westington HMI

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	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Arden
Headteacher	Mrs Lynda Carnes
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Egerton Street Stockton Heath Warrington Cheshire WA4 6DT
Telephone number	01925 264470
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stockton Heath Primary School serves an area of significant social and economic advantage. The school is bigger than the average sized primary school. There are more boys in the school than girls and in some classes the imbalance in the proportions is significant. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national figure; however, the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs is high compared with the national average. This is because the school hosts a local authority resourced unit for nine full-time pupils, all of whom have statements for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD). The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is well below the average found nationally. The school makes provision for Traveller and Gypsy Roma pupils of whom there are currently nine on roll. The vast majority of pupils in the school are of White British heritage and the number who have English as an additional language is very low. There are two pupils in the care of the local authority. Mobility of pupils into and out of the school is lower than the national figure.

In summer 2008, the school is due to move into a new building currently under construction on the existing school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. At its last inspection, Stockton Heath School was found to be generally effective with some strong features and providing good value for money. At that time, standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 6 were well above average and the quality of teaching was judged to be good. The inspection identified areas for further development which included: inconsistencies in pupils' performance; the achievement of more able pupils at Key Stage 1; the arrangements for monitoring provision; the progress of pupils throughout the school; and aspects of the work of subject leaders. To a considerable degree, concerns raised at the time of the last inspection remain today and in other respects the school's performance has deteriorated. The provision for Foundation Stage pupils continues to be a strength of the school as does pupils' personal development and well-being. Nevertheless, the school's position is not as strong as it was previously.

The school's view of its work is over generous in almost all aspects and significantly so in a few key areas. The standards now attained by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average but variable. Given their favourable starting points, this represents inadequate achievement. Standards are lower in English than in mathematics and science. Despite recent improvements in national test results, this is an overall decline on the position at the time of the last inspection. The largest decline has taken place in English standards. The situation is made more worrying by the drop in standards in Key Stage 1 where there has been a steady decline in reading and writing national test results and a recent significant decline in mathematics. This means that the task for teachers in Key Stage 2 to raise and maintain high standards is even harder. Pupils' achievement is inadequate because too many do not make consistent, rapid progress throughout the school, building on the high skill levels they attain in Foundation Stage. The momentum is lost in Key Stage 1 and partially picked up in Key Stage 2. This slow progress is now adversely affecting groups of pupils beyond the more able identified at the last inspection. Of the pupils who took the national tests in Key Stage 2 in 2007, boys made less progress than girls generally; boys who were low attaining at age seven made less progress than girls in the same position, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose main support came from the school also made less progress than their peers. In the Key Stage 1 tests, boys did significantly less well than girls, but also in comparison with all boys nationally.

The quality of teaching is not as good as the school thinks it is. It is highly variable and there is some that is inadequate. There are examples of good, strong teaching and this is found consistently in the Foundation Stage and in pockets elsewhere. The overall quality of teaching though is inadequate and unlikely to stem the general decline in standards in Key Stage 1 and increase rates of progress for all pupils.

The school's curriculum and its provision for pupils' care, guidance and support are both satisfactory.

Leadership and management are inadequate because weaknesses in key aspects of the school's work have not been identified or, where identified, have not been acted upon. The school has been hindered in its progress by considerable staff turnover, especially amongst the senior

leadership team, and by the need to address pressing staff issues. The dedicated and committed headteacher has worked for a lengthy period without the support of a deputy until the appointment in January 2008 of a substantive deputy headteacher. During the past three years, the headteacher has been managing the transition to the new building due to take place in summer 2008.

The school is running a large deficit budget which allows a generous adult-pupil staffing ratio. Given this, the decline in standards and achievement, and the limited improvement since the last inspection, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. Many are very pleased with the school's work and appreciate the staff's efforts, especially the work in the Foundation Stage, but some question the progress the school has made in certain aspects since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the ESD Resourced Provision Grade 4

The purpose of the unit is to provide a range of strategies to support and care for pupils who find difficulty coping in mainstream schools. Currently, it supports nine pupils across Years 2 to 5. The unit provides good pastoral support; children are safe and looked after, but teaching and learning are inadequate.

There are basic weaknesses in planning and differentiation: too few activities and opportunities are planned to motivate pupils and different learning styles are not accounted for. Expectations of what pupils should be doing are not made clear enough and as a result children lose concentration. The next steps in learning are not planned well enough to ensure pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics and English.

Assessment is weak. Annual assessment of progress is recorded using a nationally recognised scheme but day to day assessment is not evident other than in comments made in books and these are limited and undated. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) do not have precise targets and so progress is difficult to measure. There is no discernible pupil or parent input into the plans.

The curriculum in the unit is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils. There is little evidence of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in pupils' work and too few opportunities to write. The work in pupils' books shows little progress or match of work to pupils' needs across Years 2 to 6.

Behaviour management is not positive: there is limited evidence of strategies to help pupils to manage their own behaviour.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides well for all areas of learning despite the current difficulties with outdoor provision. Children learn to play and share well together, and excellent opportunities are provided to develop their skills in speaking and listening, reading and in writing. During their time in Reception, children make good progress, becoming increasingly independent and confident. Thus, the vast majority enter Year 1 working above the levels expected for their age, particularly in personal and social development, early reading and writing, and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

Staff are skilled in providing the precise guidance for learning which enables the children to make rapid progress. They work hard to ensure that their planning is closely built upon their assessments in order to meet the needs of all the children.

There is good communication with the private providers that feed into the Reception classes and excellent transition arrangements are in place to support children. Families appreciate the high quality of care and good communication with school.

Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. The coordinator has correctly identified the need to draw the team together to prepare for the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the move to new accommodation later this year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement for all pupils, especially in English, for boys and those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Raise standards in Key Stage 1.
- Improve provision and outcomes for pupils in the resourced unit.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve leadership and management across the school, especially the school's self-evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are average overall but they are very variable. Children work at levels above national expectations in the Foundation Stage but standards are now below average overall by the end of Key Stage 1 and average in Key Stage 2. Pupils' achievement overall is inadequate. From entering Key Stage 1 with high skill levels, their progress diminishes considerably in Key Stage 1 and picks up again during Key Stage 2 so that standards reach broadly average levels by Year 6. In Key Stage 2, progress is better in mathematics and science than it is in English, but it is variable across classes and year groups. The downward trend in Key Stage 1 results continued in 2007, with a marked drop in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in writing. Lesson observations and evidence in pupils' books confirm this general picture of underachievement.

The arrangements for teaching literacy in Year 2 are inadequate and are directly contributing to the decline in standards and the weaknesses evident in pupils' writing. Some have difficulty writing simple sentences with correct spelling of commonly used words and regular letter sound patterns. Pupils are not acquiring letter sound knowledge as quickly as they should, irrespective of their ability. These weaknesses remain evident in the work of pupils in Key Stage 2 and necessitate that teachers in Key Stage 2 review elements of the Key Stage 1 programme of study. Given the levels of skill shown by pupils by the end of Foundation Stage, this represents poor progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of children are good and this is a strength of the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils benefit from the opportunities in assemblies and in aspects of curriculum, such as French and religious education, to develop an appreciation of other cultures. The school has recognised the need to focus on preparing pupils to live in a multicultural and diverse society.

Children are friendly, helpful and kind to each other and show respect to adults and each other. Staff are good role models and build effective relationships with pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to contribute their views through the school council, such as initiating a successful project to raise funds for play equipment. They are enthusiastic about approaching the headteacher with their own fundraising ideas and are helped to put their ideas into practice to support charities of their choosing.

Pupils are aware of healthy lifestyles which are promoted through the programme of personal, social and health education. The school encourages pupils to walk or cycle to school. Good awareness of safety is promoted through schemes to support the safe use of cycles. To foster healthy lifestyles pupils are encouraged to eat healthy snacks. The school's Activemark Award reflects the regular access pupils have to physical activity.

Year 2 pupils have the opportunity to experience a residential visit to explore outdoor activities and this is built upon in Year 6 when pupils enjoy a week's residential at an outdoor pursuits centre in the Lake District. These opportunities help pupils to develop team-building skills which prepare them well for their futures.

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and they show their enjoyment of school. They say, 'Staff are really kind.' Pupils adhere to the school's rules to keep them safe and show respect for each other. They are given responsibilities within the class and 'playground leaders' are trained and given responsibility to support play. Pupils have the opportunity to take responsibilities throughout all classes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate because it does not meet the needs of all groups. The quality of teaching is highly variable and ranges from inadequate to good. The best teaching was observed in the Foundation Stage and the least effective in Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is mixed but generally better than that in Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching also varies across subjects, with the weakest teaching evident in English, particularly in Key Stage 1. Overall, the quality of English teaching is not robust enough to secure the faster progress which many pupils need to make. The better teaching features secure teacher subject knowledge and an awareness of how children learn most effectively. In the best lessons, teachers also make good use of interesting resources and have high expectations of children's behaviour and learning. Such lessons move at a brisk pace, with teaching assistants fully used and children challenged to achieve well. The less effective lessons lack pace and do not have a sufficiently strong focus on attaining rapid and secure progress. In these lessons, teachers all too often fail to make the best use of generous staff-pupil ratios and do not provide sufficient challenge and stimulation, often talking for too long. As a result, pupils sometimes become bored and even disaffected, and progress is slow for too many pupils.

The school has introduced a system for tracking pupils' progress over time and this is used in all classes. However, the expectations of the standards pupils should be reaching and how quickly they should be progressing are, in general, too low. There is limited understanding on the part of some teachers of what the pupils are capable of. Therefore, although lesson planning is differentiated according to ability groups, the overall level of challenge is too low. There is

evidence that rates of progress pick up as pupils move towards upper Key Stage 2 but more of them could be further on.

Literacy workshop sessions in Year 2 take up very large amounts of teaching time per week but add little to pupils' progress. During these sessions, a minority of pupils work with the teacher in a guided reading session whilst the majority undertake undifferentiated activities in a 'carousel' arrangement over the week. This does not represent a good use of time, resources or value for money as all pupils are in need of secure, regular teaching of key skills whatever their level of ability and they are not receiving their entitlement to this. The lack of rigour in the planning for literacy is most adversely impacting on boys and those pupils with learning difficulties. Marking of pupils' work is of variable quality and in some books uncorrected errors persist over time. This is because the marking often refers to the lesson objective and whether the pupil has achieved this, but does not refer to persistent or specific errors.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' progress and personal development.

In planning the curriculum, staff in Key Stage 2 draw largely from documentation produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Key Stage 1 staff use a thematic approach. The school is beginning to develop more cross-curricular links to subjects through 'super days'; these are appreciated by pupils and staff, but the impact on overall standards is yet to be discerned. Provision for mathematics is satisfactory but that for English is too variable, resulting in poor progress despite the good start provided by the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Provision for modern foreign languages benefits from the skills of a specialist teacher within the staff team; the school has also achieved 'Activemark' in recognition of high quality provision for sports. Provision for sport and music is enhanced by specialist teaching during teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. Pupils also appreciate the range of additional opportunities beyond the school day. A wide range of clubs is available and includes before- and after-school activities which give extended opportunities to practise skills in cricket, football, rugby and athletics. The school has a reputation for its success in inter-schools competitive sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is satisfactory.

Pastoral support is good. The school cares well for the children. All health, safety and child protection procedures are in place and are supported by links with outside agencies to ensure that children are safeguarded. Most parents value the care and support their children receive at school and pupils report that they feel safe in school and that if there is ever an incident of bullying it is dealt with.

Procedures for tracking pupils' progress over time are now in place and are being used in all classes. However, teachers' expectations are not always well matched to the needs or abilities of pupils to ensure they achieve their potential.

Most pupils have an understanding of their targets but do not receive enough guidance on what they can do to improve their work. The school has an inclusive ethos and those who are vulnerable or need additional support are welcomed to access learning in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The committed and hard working headteacher has steered the school through a difficult time since the last inspection during which period there has been significant staff turnover, especially amongst the senior leadership team. The able substantive deputy headteacher was appointed in the spring term 2008 and has not been in post long enough to have had a discernible impact on pupils' achievement.

The school's own view of its work is over generous. It has failed to identify some important areas that need improvement, such as provision and outcomes in the ESB unit, and has not taken action to improve others which have been identified. Although some progress has been made on the key issue from the previous inspection relating to the development of subject leaders this remains a priority, partly due to staff turnover and partly due to the lack of focus on the quality of teaching to raise standards and achievement further. Lesson observation is limited, mainly to the requirements of the performance management systems. Although some key staff have analysed well the position of certain groups, such as boys, and recommended they be monitored subsequently, this has not been followed up. Elsewhere, significant weaknesses which have been identified, such as progress in Year 2, have been allowed to persist.

The school's expectations for its pupils are too low, measuring standards and rates of progress against the national norms when in fact substantial numbers of its pupils are capable of much more. A number of parents expressed this view in writing to inspectors.

As at the time of the previous inspection, governance is satisfactory in that it ensures that statutory requirements are met. Governors are committed to the school and support it wholeheartedly but some aspects of its work lack rigour and challenge. For example, governors report that the subcommittee responsible for the curriculum has met less frequently than would be expected, yet this is a means by which governors should hold the school to account for the quality of its teaching and its provision.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School, Warrington, WA4 6DT

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

We think there are some really good things about your school, but we also found some ways in which we think your learning could be even better. These are the things we particularly like:

- your school is a friendly place where everyone gets on well together
- you enjoy school, especially all the clubs, the sports and dance
- you know how to be healthy and stay safe
- your school is a caring place and you said the staff look after you well
- the school council is doing a good job
- you enjoy having responsibilities and you carry these out well
- the children in the Foundation Stage classes learn a lot very quickly because the teaching is so good there.

We think that many of you could be doing better, though, especially in Key Stage 1, and we have decided that your school needs some help, which we call 'Special Measures'. This means that another inspector, or maybe two or three, will make some more visits to your school to see how things are going. We know that you will be just as kind and friendly to them as you were to us. We have asked your teachers to look closely at all your lessons, especially English lessons, and to make sure that you all do as well as you can.

We know that you will work hard and try to help Mrs Carnes and the staff make things even better for everybody in the school.