

Western Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133384
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	316106
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrea Lyons 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	423
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Robson
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Craigen
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Rutland Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 8QL
Telephone number	0191 2007250
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Western Community Primary School is a larger than average primary school. It opened in September 2002 and moved into new purpose built accommodation in November 2003.

It is situated in an area which has a high degree of social deprivation, although the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. It has a small number of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage but a slighter larger number of pupils who have English as an additional language. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is overall below the national average, although the number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is around average. It is a popular school, with an increasing number of children joining all year groups throughout the school year.

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 significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupil progress in mathematics and also in English for some groups.

Despite this, Western Community Primary School has many satisfactory features and some areas of strength. It has developed a distinctive and positive learning environment which emphasises effort and achievement across a range of skills and aptitudes. Staff encourage the development of thinking skills and the use of the full range of learning styles. The wide range of out of school clubs and enrichment activities is appreciated by pupils. The school is well regarded in the local community. It is popular with parents who are included in the school through evaluation of their views and involvement in a range of activities. Pupils' personal development is good. They are well behaved and positive about learning. The school supports the development of pupils' social and personal skills well.

Although standards are often in line with national averages overall, there is significant variation between phases and subjects, and also over time. Achievement overall is inadequate. Pupils do not make sufficient progress and this is particularly the case in mathematics in Key Stage 2.

A number of factors have contributed to these shortcomings. The school has suffered from significant staffing difficulties over this period. The process of setting targets and the tracking of pupils' progress have not been consistently effective. Both of these situations now appear to be improving. The school has been aware of the problems in mathematics and with regard to groups of pupils who are underachieving but has not always taken sufficiently swift, focused and consistent action to tackle them. This has meant that some specific groups of Key Stage 2 pupils have made inadequate progress for at least two years. The school is now being more active in tackling this.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, as the school's many strengths outweigh the weakness in managing pupil progress. The school is run well on a day- to-day basis. There is a strong commitment to staff development and to reflection and self-evaluation, although the effectiveness of this is reduced as there is not enough focus on outcomes for pupils. The headteacher has worked successfully to maintain and develop the school's strengths in a context of significant staff disruption. The school has successfully undertaken interventions with regard to specific groups of pupils to enable them to catch up, for example in last year's Year 2 and Year 6. The governing body is increasingly involved in the school, but has not held the school sufficiently accountable with regard to pupil progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Pupils generally enter the Foundation Stage with skills slightly below expectations of children of their age. This remains the case when they enter Key Stage 1, which indicates that they generally make satisfactory progress. Their personal, social and emotional skills, and physical development are better, and abilities are similar to those found nationally. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good teaching. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The curriculum offered to pupils is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistent and at least satisfactory progress for pupils across all subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure procedures for target-setting and tracking pupil progress are robust and effective.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account with regard to pupil progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate, although the school judged them to be satisfactory.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 had risen from a dip in 2004 to around or just above the national average in 2005 and 2006. However, unvalidated data provided by the school indicates that standards have declined in 2007. This is despite effective intensive support in Year 6 which improved results for a number of pupils.

The pattern in Key Stage 1 is almost a mirror image of that in Key Stage 2. Standards in Key Stage 1 had been falling since a high point of slightly above average in 2004, and in 2006 were significantly below the national average. However, unvalidated data provided by the school indicates that, following specific intervention, standards have improved in 2007 and are approaching the national average, although there is still a significant gap between reading and writing.

Pupils do not make sufficient progress in Key Stage 2 although overall there has been an improving trend. Progress in mathematics has been well below expectations since 2004. Approximately one third of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not on course to achieve their expected targets in English and mathematics.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and these pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to develop their social and communication skills, for example as talk partners. They know right from wrong and have very mature views about expectations and rules should be applied fairly. They understand the need for racial tolerance and demonstrate this in their everyday actions.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance is only satisfactory. Pupils willingly come to school, and there is little or no unauthorised absence. However, the level of authorised absence is around the national average. Pupils try hard in lessons and are keen to do their best. They have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and a good sense of how they need to act to ensure their own and others' safety. Their contribution to the community and development of basic skills are satisfactory. The school council is involved well in influencing the school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory. Lesson planning is clear, thorough and well structured. Lessons often provide approaches matched to the full range of pupils' learning styles. Teachers and support staff throughout the school emphasise the development of thinking skills, in lessons, support groups and other activities. There is effective, consistent use of talk partner activities. These factors create a positive and purposeful environment in which pupils are increasingly confident and reflective learners. Relationships between pupils and staff are good, and pupils listen attentively and concentrate well. Many teachers have a good range of skills, for example in questioning, and good subject knowledge. Where these strengths are well focused on pupils' different abilities and needs, pupils make good progress. In the best lessons, the pace was brisk and well matched to an appropriate level of challenge. Even where pupils were consolidating previous learning, teachers also ensured that they extended the activity slightly to the next level.

However, often teaching is not matched to all pupils' abilities. This is partly a result of under-developed assessment, tracking and target setting systems, particularly, but not exclusively, in mathematics. Teachers have not had, or do not always effectively use, relevant information on pupil progress. For example, pupil targets are set in mathematics but are not used effectively. Work in books is not related directly to the targets, and marking and assessment give little or no guidance about how the pupils can improve. Teaching approaches do not distinguish enough between groups of different abilities. For example, sometimes higher ability pupils were marking time during revision activities they did not need, or lower ability pupils were struggling to keep up because teachers' questioning was too focused on pupils in the middle ability range. This inconsistency of support for different ability groups in class reduces the effectiveness of the specific intervention groups, which otherwise provide good support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although the school judged the curriculum to be good, inspectors judge it to be satisfactory. This is because its many strengths are undermined by weaknesses in the core subjects of mathematics, and, to a lesser extent, English.

The curriculum meets national requirements overall. It has been enhanced with some innovative curriculum developments, particularly with regard to the development of thinking skills, reflective learning, and use of a variety of learning styles. The school is working towards the development of a skills-based curriculum. This approach leads to a distinctive and positive whole school climate for learning. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise skills learned in one subject in other areas of learning.

The enriched curriculum includes a broad range of activities before and after school, including clubs for younger pupils as well as older ones. Good work with others enriches the curriculum, including very good links with the local Enterprise College and some exciting projects with the Sage on the local shipbuilding industry. Many relevant visits out of school are closely linked with the curriculum. These include a residential visit for older pupils and a trip to France. Visitors, including the police, the fire brigade and theatre groups, enhance the richness of school

provision. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, Active Mark and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

The school has taken some action to tackle underperformance in English through the introduction of Big Writing. This has already had a positive impact on standards in the short term, although it is not always sufficiently adjusted to meet the needs of all learners. Similarly, the school has undertaken significant analysis of mathematics results and introduced a calculation policy to improve achievement. This is yet to have an impact.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good quality care for its pupils. Staff are committed to encouraging pupils to enjoy their time in school and to feel safe. Both parents and pupils comment on how welcoming and supportive the school is. Pupils are supported sensitively in their personal development and make good progress.

The school has good partnerships with other agencies, and their services are used well to provide additional support for vulnerable pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust.

Guidance and support for pupils' academic progress are inadequate overall. In some lessons, verbal guidance and visual displays are used well to support pupils in meeting their targets but the process of setting these targets and the tracking of pupils' progress have not been consistently effective

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are a number of strengths. Over the past three years, the school has had a major problem with long term staff absence and a high turnover of staff in some posts. This disruption has posed a serious challenge to the school's development and has clearly reduced pupil progress in some classes and subjects. The head teacher has managed some aspects of this very well, for example in developing, against this difficult background, a very positive school identity and a distinctive approach to learning.

The headteacher has now established a stable staff team with a number of strengths and a commitment to continuing improvement. She has prioritised staff development, with the result that staff have developed a range of skills in terms of learning styles and teaching across the wider curriculum. Some management roles are not fully developed and are in the process of change. For example, the school is rightly moving towards a system of curriculum teams in order to extend expertise and responsibility to a wider group.

The school actively involves parents in a wide range of activities, and regularly seeks their and pupils' views. This is a strength of the school. Feedback shows that the school takes action on concerns expressed and parents see clear improvements in school practice as a result. The school uses pupil and parent views well in its self-evaluation, which is generally accurate in its description of the situation, although overly positive in its judgement. However, it loses effectiveness because it does not focus enough on pupil progress.

The school is run well on a day-to-day basis. Parents find it welcoming, and are positive about the school. It is a popular and growing school, against a local trend of falling rolls.

The governing body is supportive and has begun to be more involved in monitoring the school, for example through governors' involvement in curriculum areas. However, it has not held the school sufficiently to account with regard to ensuring satisfactory pupil progress.

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

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	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	3
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	3
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Western Community Primary School, North Tyneside, NE28 8QL

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We thought you were very well behaved – helpful, polite and considerate. You really helped us in the inspection by sharing your ideas with us and explaining when we asked about various things.

We think that your school has a lot of good things about it. All the staff take care of you well and are really keen for the school to continue to improve all the time. It is a welcoming school. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and so is the curriculum. Your own personal development is good. You know about staying healthy and safe, can express yourselves well, and you are kind and helpful to each other and adults. You told us that you enjoy school, and we certainly saw that you do. In lessons you do your best and can reflect on how well you are doing.

We have asked Mrs Craigen and the staff to improve some things about the school. In particular, we have asked them to make sure that you all make the progress you are capable of, particularly in English and most especially in mathematics. This means that they will need to look carefully at how they set targets and keep track of how well you are doing.

The school has been given what is called ‘a notice to improve’. This means that in about a year’s time some other inspectors will come back to the school to see if the school has improved as much as it should have done.

Thank you again for helping us so much with the inspection. It was a pleasure to meet you. Please thank your parents for us for sending in the questionnaires. They felt that the school was a good school.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Lyons

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Linda Buller

Additional Inspector

Tony Kemp

Additional Inspector