

Kings Meadow Primary School and Early Years Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104886
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324124
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Bowen
Headteacher	Mrs A Watson
Date of previous school inspection	June 2006
School address	Meadow Lane Ainsdale Southport PR8 3RS
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and the provision in the school's integrated childcare facility. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including the school development plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings, the work pupils were doing and the questionnaires completed by 57 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils achieve from their starting points
- how effectively teaching is engaging pupils in their learning
- the accuracy of the school's judgements of its strengths and areas for development
- the capacity of the school to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average school situated on the outskirts of Southport. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. An above average number of pupils leave or join the school other than at the start of the academic year. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of an integrated childcare facility providing wrap-around care for up to 16 Nursery children as well as a Nursery class with 24 children attending the morning session. In addition, the school has a designated special needs resource facility for 10 pupils with speech and language difficulties. The school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award, the Physical Education (PE) Activemark and the Eco-Schools Award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'The school is at the hub of the community and strives to help every child achieve their goals.' 'I am really happy with the level of care and education that my child receives.' These comments, expressed by some parents and echoed overwhelmingly by others, help to explain why Kings Meadow Primary and Early Years Education Centre is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievements are good. They behave extremely well, have very positive attitudes to their learning and are caring and considerate towards others. They feel very safe in school and are happy and enthusiastic learners. This is because of exceptionally high standards of care and support for individuals. This is a school with a caring and nurturing ethos, which owes much to the school community's dedication to the welfare and personal development of all pupils, whatever their circumstances. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is outstanding. Every child is fully-included in what is offered and known as an individual. As a consequence, pupils love their school. When asked to express their views on the school they found it very difficult to think of any improvements they would like to see. There was strong praise for their teachers and the range of activities on offer. As one child said, 'The school keeps us busy. There is plenty to do.'

One of the most striking features about the school is the quality of relationships. Teachers know the pupils and their families extremely well. This means that pupils and parents are confident to approach any member of staff, knowing that their concerns will be resolved swiftly. The school has gained an enviable reputation in the community and there are outstanding partnerships with parents, other schools and local agencies.

Pupils come on in leaps and bounds during their time in the school. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils reach broadly average standards. This represents good progress considering their starting points, which are below those typically found in children of their age. Nevertheless, the school is aware that pupils' achievements are not uniformly good. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. This is because there are some pockets of inconsistency in the teaching and learning. As a result, some pupils, particularly the more able, are not achieving as rapidly as they could in some lessons.

A significant factor in pupils' good progress is that teaching is good overall with elements of outstanding practice. Furthermore, the curriculum is exceptionally well-planned with excellent opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher spearheads the work of the school. Her vision for improving the school is crystal clear and shared by staff. Considering the good advances made since its last inspection and along with its other strengths, including accurate and effective self-evaluation, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further

Ensure that pupils make more consistent progress across the school by:

- increasing the proportion of good and better lessons
- making sure that teachers' marking consistently provides pupils with advice on how to improve their work and reach the next level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Standards fluctuate year-on-year because of the small numbers of pupils, the different composition of each year group and the movement of pupils in and out of the school. Pupils' current work shows that while their attainment is broadly average, the progress pupils make in relation to their capabilities is good overall. By the time pupils transfer to Year 1 most are reaching the levels expected for their age and have made good and sometimes very good progress from their below-average starting points. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. In 2008, standards at age seven were broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected national curriculum Level 2. Progress picks up in Key Stage 2 as the quality of teaching improves. Work in lessons and in pupils' books shows that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. The 2008 national test results show that standards were broadly in line with the national averages at the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils mature into well-rounded and thoughtful young people with clear values of honesty, respect and tolerance. They are very polite, self-assured and get on extremely well with each other. Their behaviour is excellent; they show first-rate attitudes to their work and greatly enjoy their learning. This is demonstrated by their improving attendance and by their enthusiasm for the wide range of activities that the school provides. For example, pupils are proud winners of a recent First Aid competition and were crowned champions for Merseyside and the North West.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and speak highly of staff. They are confident that their voice will be heard and that any problems will be resolved swiftly. Pupils develop a strong social conscience and are eager to take on extra responsibilities, such as acting as play leaders, peer mentors, looking after younger ones, or becoming members of the active school council.

Pupils have an outstanding awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. They are proud to be members of the school's nutrition action group. Their readiness to wash their hands, eat fruit at playtimes and take part in physical

activities shows an excellent understanding of good hygiene, diet and exercise. Gaining the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards confirms the school's strong commitment to pupils' health and well-being.

Pupils participate in a rich variety of community and cultural projects, including fundraising. They are proud to go out of school to sing for local residents and participate in the annual 'Service above Self' competition for those less fortunate in the community.

Pupils are prepared well for their later life. Their good achievement in basic skills coupled with the importance placed on highly effective social and emotional development ensure that firm foundations are laid to secure their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good overall, with elements of outstanding practice, and this enables pupils to make good progress in their work. Teachers are enthusiastic, well-organised and develop strong relationships in the classroom. As a result, pupils thrive in a positive atmosphere where they are keen to learn new skills and succeed. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, particularly for those who find learning difficult. In the very best of lessons tasks are exciting, learning is fun and pupils are given every opportunity to discuss and share their ideas with others. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and are presented with a variety of stimulating activities that spur and challenge pupils to make excellent progress. For example, in an outstanding lesson in the Reception class, children were able to develop their 'positional' language by discussing a farmyard story. With excellent questioning by the class teacher, children were able to learn key words in context such as over, under and forward, and explain why animals sometimes go and hide

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

when they are upset or distressed. Where teaching is less strong, pupils' work is sometimes over-directed, activities are not always matched appropriately to pupils' needs and some of the higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough.

Systems to monitor pupils' progress are much improved since the last inspection and benefit from the outcomes of regular reviews. This gives the staff a good view of how well pupils are achieving and leads to high-quality interventions to meet their needs. The quality of assessment is good overall but, on occasions, the information does not feed sufficiently-well into teachers' planning of work, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. There are some good examples in teachers' marking where pupils are given clear guidance of how to improve their work and reach the next level. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent in some classes.

Creative, innovative, exciting opportunities based securely on pupils' interests and needs are central to the school's outstanding curriculum. It is exceptionally well-planned with a clear emphasis on the development of key skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. The teaching of these subjects is made more meaningful to pupils through an excellent range of topics and themes, which are enriched extremely well by an impressive array of extra-curricular activities such as gardening, cookery, dance and first aid and by visits to places of interest supported very well by visiting speakers from the local community.

No stone is left unturned to ensure that all pupils, including those who are most in need of additional support, are supported and cared for very well. There are excellent procedures for introducing children to the Nursery and for ensuring their smooth transition to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The success of the school is underpinned by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who works with energy and ambition to drive the school forward. She is passionate about maximising the potential of every child in a caring and structured environment where all pupils are encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. As a result, the school is highly effective in striving to improve pupils' life chances and in tackling discrimination. The headteacher is supported very well by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and sense of purpose. As a group, they know the school extremely well and actively seek out ways to improve further the current position. This means that there is strong agreement on the strengths of the school and where further improvements can be made. For example, senior leaders are well aware that pupils would make more consistent progress across the school if teaching and learning in the small number of satisfactory lessons could be improved.

At the time of the inspection, safeguarding was a high priority and procedures were good. Appropriate systems are in place to access the suitability of employees to work with children. All procedures meet current government requirements.

The school's promotion of community cohesion has improved and is now good. Opportunities that encourage insights into other religions and in pupils' awareness of other cultures in their own community and further afield are planned carefully and taught sensitively across the curriculum in ways that are meaningful, through special themes and assemblies and discussions with visitors about their culture and customs.

The governing body plays an effective role in shaping the school's direction and in holding the school to account. Governors are extremely committed and are increasingly confident in challenging and supporting the school to improve further. They are well-informed and are involved in planning for improvement and in evaluating the school's performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to the school are below and sometimes well below those typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. The good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the integrated childcare facility, ensures that children settle quickly and make good progress across all areas of learning. This is because of the warm, caring ethos that prevails where every child is supported and looked after very well. Teaching is good, learning is fun and practical activities are well-targeted on key learning goals that match well with children's stages of development. As a consequence, children become absorbed in their learning through play and have the confidence to initiate activities for themselves as well as follow clearly established routines. Teachers challenge children's thinking with exciting tasks and purposeful activities. For example, pupils were able to explore their knowledge and understanding of the life cycle of a butterfly by looking at a caterpillar under a microscope that projected the image onto a computer screen. Elsewhere, children were encouraged to develop their thinking by making their own choices as to what they would take on a picnic. Children in the childcare provision were encouraged to use their language while developing their motor skills. 'I'm

folding this shape up like a pancake,' explained one child as he moulded some playdough.

The leadership of the integrated childcare facility incorporated in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All staff work very effectively as a team to ensure that children's welfare needs are effectively met. Parents are kept very well-informed and are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning. Staff continually assess how well children are achieving and use this information to plan further challenges. As a result, by the start of Year 1, most children have reached the levels expected for this age and have made good progress from their starting points.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kings Meadow Primary School and Early Years Education Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If parents have more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. All agree that pupils enjoy school, make good progress, are well-prepared for the next stage of their education and are supported and cared for very well. Fewer than 5% of the questionnaires raised any concerns and there were no issues which were relevant to the school as a whole.

The inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 120 families registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	12	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kings Meadow Primary School and Early Years Education Centre, Southport, PR8 3RS

Thank you so much for helping the inspectors and me when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, in the playground and in the interview with the school council. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and having spent the two days with you we can understand why. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. This is what we found out.

First and most importantly, we are pleased to tell you that you go to an outstanding school. You make good progress in your work and are taught well. We were really pleased to see how the adults in school look after you very well and your parents told us this too. We were very pleased to see how well you behave and how you help one another in class and around the school.

You told us that you enjoy your work and that your teachers help you to learn well by making your lessons interesting and often fun. We could see this with our own eyes when those of you in Year 1 were planting pumpkin seeds in the school garden, when those of you in Year 3 and 4 were learning Spanish and when those of you in Year 6 were dancing and moving to music in the school hall. We were also impressed with your singing in assembly and were very pleased to hear about your success in winning the First Aid competition.

Mrs Watson and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and we are confident that it will continue to improve. To help them, we have asked them to ensure that all of you make the best possible progress in your work by making even more of your lessons like the very best ones we saw when you were very enthusiastic about your learning and by making sure that when they mark your work they always give you advice on how to improve further. You can help by telling your teachers what makes your lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

Keep trying hard. We can see why your teachers enjoy working with you every day.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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