

Stockton Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110996
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	331126
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	352
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Rachel Brougham
Headteacher	Mrs Lynda Carnes
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	West Avenue Stockton Heath Warrington Cheshire WA4 6HX
Telephone number	01925 215640

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Inspection number	331126

Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Stockton Heath is a larger than average sized primary school serving an area of above average levels of social and economic advantage. The school moved into its new building in September 2008 and the demolition of the old building was completed by January 2009. Most pupils are of White British heritage, and almost all speak English as their first language. A well below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the number with a statement of special educational need is above average. This is because the school hosts local authority resourced provision which has capacity for 10 places for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD).

When Stockton Heath Primary school was inspected in April 2008 it was judged to require special measures due to inadequacies in achievement and standards, leadership, teaching and learning, and in the effectiveness of the resourced provision. Subsequently, monitoring visits were carried out by HMI in the autumn term 2008 and spring term 2009. This inspection is the result of the third monitoring visit.

Little Lot Nursery, situated within the school building and sharing some of the outdoor facilities, is managed by a private provider and not visited as part of this inspection. A separate inspection report for this provision is available on the Ofsted website.

The school holds the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Stockton Heath Primary School provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils.

Pupils leave the school having attained standards that are generally above average. This represents satisfactory achievement based on their attainment and skills when pupils enter Key Stage 1. The school acknowledges that more could be done to ensure that all pupils across the school make good progress, also enabling a higher proportion to reach the above average standards of which they are capable. Actions already taken have had a positive impact, for example on the progress pupils make in Key Stage 1, which is now satisfactory and improving.

The school's provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory overall. Good pastoral care is reflected in the positive relationships between adults and pupils across the school. The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced and generally meets pupils' needs. Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour and attendance, is good. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves active, healthy and safe. Their good development of social skills, along with good basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT), ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Key factors in the school's relatively quick recovery since its previous inspection are the significant improvements in the quality of leadership and in teaching, both of which are satisfactory with a number of important strengths. The headteacher and deputy headteacher articulate high expectations and a clear vision for the school's future development. This is widely shared by staff, who are held to account for their own performance. Keenly directed professional development and focused support have had a very positive impact on teachers' confidence and expertise. Teachers' increased knowledge of the attainment and progress of each individual pupil allows them to plan their teaching with a much clearer focus on what pupils need to learn. Senior and middle leaders recognise that the key to future improvement lies in securing consistently good or better teaching. The best lessons really capitalise on pupils' positive attitudes to learning, by setting challenges that promote enthusiasm and develop pupils' thinking and problem solving skills.

Effectiveness of the ESBD Resourced Provision Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the enhanced provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is satisfactory. There have been improvements since the school was last inspected, although this has been fragmented and not part of a wider strategic plan. The curriculum places emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, and social and communication skills. Improvements have been made to planning for individual needs and assessment and tracking of progress in literacy and numeracy, and pupils are making satisfactory progress in these areas. Pupils are also becoming more confident in their use of ICT and some are beginning to produce work of a standard expected for their age. For example, they have created power point presentations linked to their work in geography. However, planning for subjects other than literacy and numeracy is too informal and lacks the rigour needed to promote good progression in learning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the better lessons the pupils are clear about what is expected of them and are given good guidance and support to help them to achieve their targets. The teaching assistants make a significant and valuable contribution to pupils' progress and well-being. Pupils enjoy practical activities and this promotes

better learning. Where tasks are not explained clearly and fail to capture interest, the pupils soon become distracted and the focus of the lesson shifts away from learning to managing behaviour. The environment is usually calm, with pupils behaving well and showing respect for staff and each other. Attendance for half of the pupils is good and in line with that of the rest of the school. For others, it is satisfactory. Some pupils have opportunities to join in lessons with their peers in the main school, for example in physical education or art. Arrangements for these links are informal and the teacher in charge acknowledges the need to develop them further. The local authority has plans to change the designation of the enhanced provision to cater for up to 10 pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) with effect from September 2009. Some training for staff has already begun, but the school and local authority recognise that more is required to meet the training needs of the lead professional.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

There have been very recent changes to the management structure of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The impact of the appointment of the Early Years' manager is already tangible in terms of clear, sharp, focused analyses of the setting's strengths and a strong commitment to addressing areas identified for improvement.

Children join the Reception class from a considerably wide range of pre-school settings but most have attended the attached 'Little Lot' Nursery. Links with this setting are positive and productive, ensuring that the children's transition into school is seamless and supportive.

The manager and staff are currently involved in establishing an assessment system that will give a much clearer picture of each child's strengths and interests on entry to Reception. Other information available shows that the majority have skills and understanding above those typically seen in children of their age. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and school data show that the majority enter Year 1 well prepared in reading, writing and mathematics. Opportunities for the children to develop key skills in other areas of learning are less well developed. While appropriate plans are in place to improve the provision, the current teaching, curriculum and activities provided, both indoor and outdoor, are satisfactory.

The care and welfare of the children are of paramount importance. The manager has developed an effective 'key person' system whereby each child has one specific adult with whom they can share their news, excitement, interests or worries.

Effective use is made of all adults to support small focus group activities alongside continuous provision. Adults are becoming more skilled in responding to and providing for children's interests, especially those of the boys. Recent developments in the organisation of the outdoor curriculum have also been successful in promoting enjoyment and exploration. However, the manager and all staff recognise that still more work is necessary in this area to ensure that the learning and development needs of all the children are more effectively provided for.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are more able, make good progress in their learning to reach their potential.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that all lessons are good or better and effectively promote pupils' independent learning and problem solving skills.
- Improve the overall effectiveness and leadership of the enhanced provision.

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

Pupils' skills and abilities on entry to Year 1 are generally above average, taking into account variations from year to year. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average overall and this represents satisfactory progress. Inspection evidence indicates that all groups of learners are achieving satisfactorily, as the proportion of more able pupils who are reaching the higher levels is now showing an upward trend as more challenging targets are being met.

The assessment of Year 2 pupils in 2008 reflected the findings of the previous inspection, that achievement in Key Stage 1 was inadequate overall in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has worked successfully to improve standards, particularly in writing. Pupils' work during lessons and in their books, and the school's assessment data show that standards are above average and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3, in mathematics and writing in particular, has risen considerably. Overall, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is now satisfactory.

Following particularly weak test results in English at Key Stage 2 in 2007, improvement was evident in 2008 when 93% of pupils reached the expected Level 4 or above in that subject. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was not as high as it should have been in all three core subjects, although overall progress in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory based on those pupils' previous attainment in Key Stage 1. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment information indicate that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets which represent a small improvement on results in 2008. Most importantly, the proportion of more able pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is also set to rise, although the school acknowledges that there is more to do in this area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. They behave in a courteous, caring and mature way. They articulate their views in a fair and reasonable manner and grow in self-esteem and confidence. Through the school council pupils contribute their ideas for improvement, but have asked for more time to discuss school council issues in their classes. They have a strong sense of loyalty to their school community.

Through art, music and drama as well as stories in English and visits to museums, pupils develop a good awareness of other faiths and cultures. They take part in fund-raising events, for example Red Nose day, when pupils raised money for children in other countries suffering from malaria. In subjects such as geography and French as well as in assemblies, pupils develop their awareness of other European countries, although more could be done to develop awareness of the wider international dimension.

The pupils are prepared well for moving up to their next classes, and for the transition to secondary school. They develop good basic literacy, numeracy, social and communication skills as well as independence and maturity – all of which contribute well to their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils are making expected progress across the school. Recent, significant upturns in teaching have, in most classes, begun to pull pupils of all abilities and backgrounds closer to and in some cases beyond, their expected levels of attainment. In more than two thirds of lessons observed during the inspection, teaching and learning were good or better and no inadequate teaching was seen.

Teachers are assessing and analysing pupils' levels of attainment on a regular basis and this provides valuable information for the school about the progress of year groups, classes and individual pupils. Higher expectations of the levels that pupils can achieve and more appropriate learning targets and tasks ensure that more pupils, especially the more able, are now working more effectively and beginning to make better progress. In less successful lessons these elements are not consistently present, resulting in a slower and less challenging pace of learning.

Secure relationships generate very good behaviour and attitudes to learning across the school. Pupils are keen to learn and are particularly excited when teachers provide more demanding, thought-provoking, problem solving experiences. The recent introduction of procedures to help pupils check the quality of their own work and that of their peers indicates the school's commitment to further improving pupils' learning and progress. The valuable work of the teaching assistants is greatly appreciated by teachers and by pupils, especially those who find learning difficult. This extra help ensures that these pupils make the most of their lessons and progress equally well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's broad and balanced curriculum meets pupils' needs and promotes academic achievement satisfactorily. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development, for example through their enjoyment of the specialist provision in dance, drama, music and art. Many pupils also enjoy a wide range of sporting activities within and beyond the school day. Some of these have been restricted up until recently, due to the completion of the new building and its outdoor areas, and 'snagging' issues in the school hall. A good number of pupils take up the opportunities provided in extra-curricular activities which include French, several sports, and music.

A programme of educational visits and visitors, and a recent ICT project, make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. The school's focus on developing pupils' writing skills across the school, and phonic skills at Key Stage 1, have contributed to the improvements made in these areas since the last inspection.

The school is planning an appropriate and timely review of its curriculum. Leaders and staff are committed to providing pupils with more regular and consistent opportunities to explore, investigate, and use and apply their skills across an exciting range of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are generally confident and articulate and get along very well with each other within the school's caring ethos. Day-to-day care and supervision of pupils is good and they feel safe and secure. Safeguarding and health and safety procedures are in place and meet requirements. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out, for example before educational visits and trips take place. However, some aspects of record keeping have lacked rigour during the move to the new school building. Leaders are remedying this situation and a staff training update in some aspects of care and guidance is planned to take place before the end of term.

Teachers often focus their planning and assessment on setting targets for all pupils which help them make progress in their learning. This is most successful when it is coupled with helpful, supportive marking that clearly points out what has been done well, what needs to improve and, in some cases, how specific targets have been achieved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and have grown in expertise and confidence since the inspection in April 2008. When the school was placed into special measures at that time, it required significant guidance and support from the local authority to strengthen the capacity of leaders to bring about necessary improvements. There has been a shift away from the need for such support, and the school's local authority link adviser is now involved in moderating senior leaders' evaluation judgements and challenging the school to accelerate the progress of more able pupils, for example. The headteacher also appreciates the level of challenge provided in the termly visits by the School Improvement Partner.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development, which matches that of the inspection team. Leaders are developing well the use of success criteria against which to judge the impact of their actions.

Middle leaders have improved their skills and confidence in contributing to the school's monitoring and evaluation. Teachers are held accountable for the progress made by pupils in their classes. This was borne out in inspectors' meetings with teachers, all of whom were able to knowledgeably discuss the progress of individual pupils in their class, and what was being done to identify and remedy any underachievement.

As part of the school's commitment to equality and inclusion, leaders now analyse the performance of different groups of learners, asking questions where progress appears to slow, and taking action to bring about improvement. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to develop their understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion across the three key strands: faith; ethnicity and culture; and socio-economic dimensions. Although many aspects are generally promoted within areas of the curriculum, and evident in the school's ethos, this is not yet strategically evaluated or reported on.

Value for money is satisfactory. Governors have worked alongside senior leaders and the local authority to reduce the school's deficit budget during its reorganisation of staffing responsibilities and planning for the future. The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is

secure due to effective leadership which has contributed to the improvements in teaching and learning.

Governors are well informed and are involved in monitoring the school's performance. Recent developments include linking individual governors with particular classes. This is proving to be an enjoyable activity for staff, pupils and governors as they share learning experiences in the classroom.

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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?	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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3
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 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

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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?	No

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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently.

The other inspectors and I enjoyed speaking to many of you around school and in your classes. As you may know, this was my third visit to Stockton Heath because the school was in 'special measures' and needed to make some improvements. I'm pleased to tell you that the school no longer requires special measures – it is providing a satisfactory education now, and is getting better all the time. Some of the positive things we saw were:

- pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are good, you are happy in school and enjoy your learning, and many of you especially enjoy being given challenging activities to do in class
- teaching has improved, in many of your lessons it is now good or better
- your headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders are setting a clear way forward and checking the school's work closely so that improvements will continue
- all pupils are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their work and standards are above average.

We have suggested three key actions that the school should work on to make further improvements, and these have been agreed with the leadership team and governors.

- Improve your achievement further, so that all of you make really good progress in your learning and reach the highest levels that you are capable of.
- Continue to improve teaching so that it is good or better all of the time and you are challenged to use your thinking and problem solving skills in more lessons.
- Make some improvements to the work and leadership of the enhanced provision class.

Of course, you can carry on playing your part by continuing to behave well, attend school every day and enjoy your learning!