

Northcote Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104564
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336332
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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 of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Lawless
Headteacher	Mr Roy Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
School address	Cavendish Drive Walton Liverpool L9 1HW
Telephone number	0151 2841919
Fax number	0151 2841920
Email address	northcote-ht@northcote.liverpool.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 14 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, the progress and attainment of pupils, the curriculum, the school's development plan and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance. The views of parents and carers, through 90 returned inspection questionnaires, and the opinions of staff and pupils were analysed.

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

- whether learning targets in English and mathematics are sufficiently challenging
- whether teachers deliver lessons which enable pupils to reach their potential
- the impact of curricular enrichment on pupils' enjoyment of school
- how successful leaders and managers are in improving pupils' achievement
- the impact of the school's strategies for enhancing pupils' personal development and well-being from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of pupils are of White British background. A very small minority are from minority ethnic groups. A few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school has gained the Inclusion Charter Mark at advanced level, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Dyslexia Friendly, National Healthy Schools, Financial Management Standard in Schools, Artsmark and Activemark awards.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. The bedrock of its success is that it provides outstanding care, guidance and support for every child and family. Parents overwhelmingly agree. Comments such as, 'my children are safe and very well looked after', and, 'the school has a very friendly family atmosphere', confirm these views.

Pupils begin school with skills which are low, particularly in their social, speaking and listening skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the high priority adults give to developing their communication and personal skills. This good progress continues as pupils move through the school. In recent years, pupils' attainment has been broadly average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils' current work confirms similar attainment and the school's own data show that rates of progress are good across the school for all groups of pupils. The close attention teachers give to, for instance, setting challenging targets in English and mathematics is paying off and standards are rising. However, although attainment has improved, in a few lessons tasks set do not always match closely enough pupils' capabilities. Similarly, marking does not consistently provide pupils with enough guidance about how to improve their work further.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop good relationships with each other, and with children from other cultures through strong international links. Pupils' learning is enriched immensely within the curriculum. This is because sports, music and creative arts are given a high profile. A good partnership between home and school contributes to pupils' good behaviour and their enjoyment of school. However, although attendance is improving, it remains low. This is because 10% of pupils are persistently absent.

A good track record of improvement since the last inspection illustrates leaders' and governors' ambition and drive. Central to the improvement in pupils' achievement since that inspection has been the rigorous self-evaluation and ongoing review of pupils' learning that leaders, staff and governors have undertaken. The school has a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development and all staff are strongly committed and involved in monitoring the school's performance. This demonstrates the school's good capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment further, by:
 - ensuring activities set in lessons closely match pupils' capabilities

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- -making sure that marking consistently informs pupils about what they need to do next in order to improve their work.
- Improve attendance, by:
 - continuing to work with parents and external agencies to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Achievement is good and most pupils enjoy their time in school. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils concentrate, listen well and join in discussions fully. They collaborate with one another, sharing ideas readily. Many are confident in explaining what they are doing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those at an early stage of learning English and the more vulnerable, make similar good progress to their classmates.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and why, and they are eager to point out that some things are not safe. For instance, 'we have security gates so strangers can't get in', and, 'don't touch the computer with wet hands'. Behaviour is good and incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils say, 'any problems are quickly sorted by teachers'. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils make a good contribution within the school and local community. As school councillors, they made a significant contribution to designing the new playground facilities. Similarly, as dining hall helpers, they feel appreciated as they say, 'staff really need our help'. A wide range of opportunities are made available which allow pupils' musical, artistic and sporting talents to shine as they develop new skills and become self-confident, happy young people. Through designing, marketing and selling the products they make on enterprise days, pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop their financial, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively. The school is constantly striving to improve attendance and has had some success in reducing the number of persistently absent pupils. However, the 10% of pupils who are persistently absent miss out on the exciting curriculum provided and on essential learning. This explains why overall, the extent to which all pupils develop workplace skills is no better than satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their understanding of other cultures is strong. The activities, such as the Year 5 topic on growing up in South Africa, which stems from their link to a school in Kenya, or celebrating the cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school, help them to develop respect for and understanding of other religions and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall. In a small minority of lessons observed, its quality is outstanding. In all lessons, the quality of relationships is strong and learning is enhanced by the effective use of computers. Pupils' views are testament to this, for example, 'I enjoy the way the teachers make an effort to make lessons more interesting and the fact that teachers are so friendly to pupils.' Strengths include the effective use of assessment strategies, such as 'talk partners' and learning targets, and the support individual pupils receive from highly-skilled learning support assistants. In the few lessons where teaching is no better than satisfactory, most pupils are well behaved and interested, even when learning loses pace and progress slows or where marking does not help them clearly understand what they need to do to improve further.

Although the curriculum has some tremendous strengths, in a few lessons, tasks are not matched closely enough to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they could. Pupils make the most of and thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities they are given to engage and excel in sporting, musical and artistic activities. Subjects are linked creatively to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in an enjoyable way. Such good quality provision ensures that pupils who attend regularly are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The vast majority of parents and carers say that the school is very caring. Pupils are happy to go to staff with any concerns. All adults are particularly sensitive to more needy pupils, of whom there are many. Pupils learn from their example. For instance, older pupils demonstrate sensitivity and care towards younger ones. The continuous work of the school and strong links with outside agencies are helping to improve

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attendance. The school works successfully to ensure that, when pupils return from periods of absence, they receive intensive support, emotionally and academically, to enable them to catch up in their learning. Induction and transfer to high school are managed well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led effectively by the dedicated and well-respected headteacher. He is well supported by the senior management team, including the highly-skilled deputy headteacher, who makes a telling contribution to the high quality systems in place to check pupils' progress. Teamwork and high staff morale are evident in a shared ambition to seek constant, further improvement. All staff are included in self-evaluation, performance management and improvement planning. The expertise of some staff is used to support colleagues in neighbouring schools. Governors effectively play their part in promoting improvement and in challenging performance. The governing body possesses the relevant expertise to support the school's work and to evaluate its effectiveness. It ensures that all safeguarding requirements are fully met and that pupils' safety has a high profile in all of the school's work. The ethos established in the school is one of promoting equality for all. This is evident in the many aspects of support for different groups of pupils, for instance, in narrowing the gap in attainment for those who are more vulnerable or for pupils who have long periods of absence. Nevertheless, more work is needed to improve attendance.

Partnerships with others are good, particularly in promoting pupils' well-being and their social and emotional development. For instance, links with local high schools extend pupils' sporting and musical talents very effectively. Most parents and carers say how pleased they are with the school and how welcome they are made to feel. The quality of community cohesion is good because the school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to learn from, both in this country and through international links, children from a wide range of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good and adults provide them with time to investigate and explore. Similarly, extremely caring adults and an exciting learning environment ensure that all children really relish their time here. This is reflected in the sheer joy on their faces as they choose whether to play in the well planned and continually improving outdoor spaces or to undertake a wide range of indoor play opportunities. For instance, they skilfully design seed packets or make tropical fruit cocktails, contribute to the 'wow wall' writing about their holidays, or use cameras to develop their photography skills. Such activities, just a sample of the exciting play experiences that await children each day, effectively extend their problem solving, decision making and understanding of the world in which they live . Good relationships with home are fostered through the weekly 'stay and play' sessions during which parents and carers join their children at play. All adults are very attentive to ensuring that children are safe and all welfare requirements are met. On entry to Year 1, most children's speaking, listening and social skills are much better developed, as a result of the good progress they make, despite being below those expected for their age. Leadership is good. The manager has worked enthusiastically and skilfully to extend and refine the records of how children are progressing. Ongoing observations of children at play are collated by all adults. These are highly reflective and informative, and are used effectively to plan children's next steps in learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the 81 parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire say their children enjoy school, that the school keeps their children safe and that they are content with the education and care their children receive. A few, 4%, felt that their views were not taken into account and 8% that unacceptable behaviour was not always dealt with effectively. Evidence indicates that parents' and carers' individual concerns are responded to appropriately and that behaviour observed during the inspection was good. Inspection evidence agrees with the very positive responses which most parents and carers submitted about all aspects of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northcote Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 344 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	69	26	29	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	58	64	30	33	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	54	39	43	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	54	40	44	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	59	37	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	59	33	37	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	50	42	47	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	42	47	52	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	57	38	42	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	41	45	50	7	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	43	46	51	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	50	44	49	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	63	31	34	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northcote Primary School, Liverpool, L9 1HW

I would like to thank you for your help to the team when we inspected your school. I especially enjoyed listening to the brass band. What a talented group you are and worthy winners of the recent Junior Brass Band competition. Now I would like to share with you what the inspection found out about your school. Yours is a good school. Some of the best things about it are:

- you have lots of fun and enjoy learning while you play in the Nursery and Reception classes
- all adults take outstanding care of you and you told us that you feel safe in school
- you are making good progress and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave
- you behave well and have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy life.

To make the school even better, I have asked your teachers to:

- make sure that work in lessons always matches your different abilities
- give you more advice as to how you can improve your work
- work with parents and carers to reduce the number of pupils who miss all the fun at school because they are absent for so much of the time.

You can all help by always trying your very best and letting teachers know if your work is too easy or too hard. Those of you who are away from school quite a lot can also help by attending more often.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Clare Henderson

Lead inspector

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