

Mendell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105017
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	355681
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Faulkner
Headteacher	Jacqueline McCallum
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed nine teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, managers, staff, the School Improvement Partner and groups of pupils. In observing the school's work they looked at pupils' workbooks, assessment records, school policies and school development plans. In total 54 parental questionnaires were received, analysed and considered, alongside 91 questionnaires completed by the pupils and 21 by school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether leaders and school developments are effective in sustaining the recent improvements to progress and attainment.
- Whether lessons, especially in writing, are promoting the best possible progress for all groups of pupils.
- How effectively the quality of care supports personal development and promotes regular attendance.
- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are learning and if they are effectively prepared for their work in Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

This school is slightly smaller in size than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average and the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

In recognition of the good work done the school holds the Activemark, Arts mark and Eco schools awards and has Healthy School status.

There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. The new teaching team have been working together for 2 years.

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. The experienced and determined headteacher leads the successful drive for improvement and generates strong ambition. In a short space of time she has developed strong team work, facilitating and supporting the introduction of innovative practices in teaching and the curriculum. A rigorous system of self-evaluation and development planning is successful in providing an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and addressing issues swiftly. As a result, progress and the rate of attendance have improved and standards have risen. Therefore, the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Attainment is average by the end of Year 6 which represents good progress from pupils' starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and are encouraged to be independent learners. When working in small ability groups children learn very well. However, children's needs are not met as effectively when the whole class is taught together. On these occasions parts of the work are too difficult for some and they do not learn as well as they could. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through school, and learning is often excellent in Years 5 and 6. The introduction of a new programme for letters and sounds means that children are beginning to read, spell and write at an earlier stage, so those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 are now making excellent progress in these areas.

Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Pupils are enthused and motivated because teachers include an interesting variety of strategies in their lessons, such as short challenges or games, collaborative exercises and practical assignments. Pupils' progress is constantly assessed and work is provided at different levels of difficulty so it builds effectively on prior learning. The more able sometimes have exacting challenges but this is not always the case and there are occasions where they could be stretched further. The curriculum includes some imaginative links between subjects. These result in good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills, research and learn independently.

Pupils say they enjoy school, are happy and feel safe. Their behaviour is outstanding and makes a strong contribution to good learning in lessons and a calm, productive atmosphere. Good partnerships with other schools and agencies help to extend pupils' experiences and provide excellent support for specific, individual needs. Pupils

learn about world faiths and cultures through the curriculum but have few opportunities to actively engage with those from different backgrounds, either in this country or globally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the range of children's learning needs are consistently met in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially when children are taught as a whole class.
- Ensure that the more-able pupils are consistently challenged to the full in lessons.
- Develop links with schools and communities in other parts of the country and abroad so that pupils have better opportunities to engage with those of different backgrounds, cultures and faiths.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils relish the challenges that their teachers set for them and clearly enjoy and extend their learning in lessons. For example, those in Year 5 collaborated extremely well on problem-solving exercises, applying their very good understanding of percentages, as well as digital and analogue time, to produce a balanced television schedule. Pupils in Year 1 discussed interesting adjectives before writing their 'holiday postcards' and those in Year 2 had fun 'building sounds' to read new words. All age groups have positive attitudes to learning and work hard.

Children are currently leaving Reception with attainment that is average. This marks a good improvement on previous years when attainment was not as high and some children had some gaps in their learning on entry to Year 1. Progress is good in Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in writing have improved significantly this year and a concerted effort to boost attainment in mathematics has been successful. By the end of Year 6 attainment is average and achievement is good. However, there is scope to increase attainment further by ensuring that the more able are consistently stretched to the full in lessons. Historically, there have been some gaps in attainment and progress between groups of pupils, for example boys and girls or pupils with birthdays at different times of the year. Teachers are dealing very well with this issue by carefully planning theme work that appeals to all pupils and lessons that meet different learning needs and dispositions. Boys and girls now make equal progress in lessons and any remaining differentials in the rate of learning are closing quickly. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported so they have good self-esteem and make good progress.

Pupils are exceptionally polite and show kindness and care towards each other. Behaviour is outstanding and older ones demonstrate mature attitudes and self-discipline. Pupils have a sound knowledge of, and good respect for, faiths and cultures that are different from their own. They play an active role within the local community and their choir performances are especially well regarded. Their understanding of everyday life within contrasting cultures is satisfactory and developing. School councillors ensure that pupils' views are represented in the decision-making process and the eco team are instrumental in promoting

environmental awareness. Pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles is demonstrated through participation in a wide range of sports and fitness activities. Attendance is average and this, combined with satisfactory basic skills and an eagerness to succeed, means pupils are soundly prepared for their future education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. Relationships are good and pupils trust their teachers. As one pupil explained, 'Teachers tell us to do your best and don't give up'. Lessons have very clear objectives so pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Pupils have helpful targets so they know what is needed to improve. Frequent opportunities for self-assessment ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and this enables them to be independent learners. Lessons are often imaginative and exciting. For example, teachers include a range of learning techniques such as 'quiz-quiz-trade' or 'cocktail parties' that allow pupils to share knowledge and skills. Teachers have a detailed view of pupils' progress and plan work to build accurately on their prior learning. Expectations are generally high and pupils enjoy good challenges. Occasionally, however, the work set for the more-able individuals does not extend their talents to the full. Marking is helpful and daily target time is set aside where pupils review their work, respond to their teachers' comments and set goals for themselves. This means that small problems are addressed promptly and this underpins the good progress made. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and trained effectively. As a result, they make a good impact on learning, both in class and small intervention groups, carefully planned to meet pupils' needs to overcome any gaps in learning.

The good curriculum includes a strong emphasis on personal education and varied opportunities for creative and practical work. Planning makes very effective links between subjects and allows for good collaboration between year groups. For example, Years 5 and 6 have enjoyed working together on their Victorians theme, sharing ideas and learning from each other. A recent Survival Day took pupils out of

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

the classroom to develop self-help skills, such as making shelters. A major strength of the curriculum lies in the tailoring of tasks and support. This ensures that specific needs are met and provides a good boost for learning where pupils are not reaching their expected targets. Similar provision to extend the most able is in the developmental stage. A good programme of extra-curricular clubs and competitive sport helps pupils to hone their skills and encourages them to try new interests.

The school provides a warm and welcoming ethos and a good standard of care. Pupils who have highly specific needs, or who are potentially vulnerable, are exceptionally well supported by trained staff and outside expertise. This work is praised by parents and carers who commend the support that their children receive. Good links with the secondary school ensure a smooth transition to the next phase of education. Rewards for good attendance and punctuality, together with rigorous monitoring of absence and support for families, have resulted in improved, average rates of attendance. The school, with the support of outside agencies, is now working with a few families to further reduce the incidence of holidays taken in term time and to tackle any unnecessary absence.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good, focused leadership and clear direction for the school. A careful recruitment process has ensured a good balance of expertise and experience among the new team of teachers. Under the direction of the deputy headteacher they have reviewed and developed the curriculum. Teaching is carefully monitored and leading teachers share their skills with others so that not only does teaching improve but all age groups benefit from their talents. Staff pay good attention to ensuring that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged, so pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, an improved system for tracking pupils' progress means that managers and class teachers have an accurate view of the achievements of different groups of pupils and are aware of the need to ensure the support for the more able is consistent in all classes. The school is well run on a day-to-day basis; procedures and policies are consistently followed and value for money is good.

The effective governing body is supportive whilst also holding managers to account for school performance. Members are robust in discharging their statutory responsibilities, ensuring that the views of stakeholders are fully considered. They are actively involved in school life and complete a regular 'walk through' in order to check provision and maintain constructive relationships with staff.

Community cohesion is successful in promoting harmony in school and in providing opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community. However, there are few

links with different communities nationally and around the world. Profitable partnerships with local schools and educational providers bring additional experiences to the curriculum, for example in music, modern foreign languages and physical education. The ‘bridging project’ with the high school also ensures a smooth transition into Year 7. Safeguarding meets requirements. Staff have regular updates in their child protection training and are well equipped to deal with any concerns. Parents and carers are encouraged to engage in their children’s learning and receive a good amount of information about progress, the curriculum, and school events.

These are the grades for the 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
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When they start in the Nursery children’s development varies widely. Overall, they have a range of skills that are below expectations for the age group, especially in early reading, writing and number work. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly. Teaching is good. Children’s independence is promoted successfully as they are constantly encouraged to follow their own lines of enquiry and explore their world. Progress is constantly assessed and the ‘learning journey’ booklets provide a detailed record of each child’s development. Planning takes careful account of children’s interests and their stage of learning in order to keep them well motivated and challenged. For example, children had great fun making their ‘bubble blowers’, sharing a big book and constructing their own ‘beach’ in the sand tray. Teachers plan small group sessions, for example in writing, where children at the same level of development work very successfully together. However, when the whole class is taught together at the start of sessions, learning is slower and some children find it hard to keep up with the pace of the learning because it is not always pitched at their level of ability.

Children make good progress and most are now working at the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1, which represents a good improvement on previous years. Leadership and management are good and ensure that routines, policies and procedures are consistently followed. Good care and partnerships with outside agencies ensure that individual children’s needs are met and they are able to access all activities. For example, links with the Children’s Centre ensure good support for families and integrated care programmes where appropriate. There are good systems

for sharing information with parents and carers, and for involving them in their children’s education, especially through the ‘stay and play’ sessions.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire have very positive views and a very large majority are happy with their children’s experiences of school. Quotes that reflect these opinions include: ‘I must praise the excellence of the teachers’; ‘My child receives the help he needs to succeed’; and ‘The teachers and staff go out of their way to help and support with any problems or concerns I have’. There are commendations for the good standard of care and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Inspection endorses these views. A few parents and carers felt that their children were not making enough progress. Inspection finds that pupils currently make good progress and it is much improved over the last two years. No other major issues were raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mendell 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	74	10	19	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	76	13	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	61	18	33	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	57	17	31	6	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	59	18	33	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	54	22	41	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	57	23	43	0	0	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)	31	57	19	35	1	2	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	48	24	44	4	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	54	21	39	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	52	21	39	4	7	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	50	23	43	1	2	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	59	19	35	2	4	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mendell Primary School, Wirral, CH62 7HN

Thank you for the very warm welcome and lovely smiles you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and appreciated the interesting conversations we had and all the help you gave us.

Mendell Primary is a good school. Your behaviour is excellent and you all get on extremely well together. You are a credit to yourselves, your families and your school. Thank you to the pupils who filled in their questionnaire and those who chatted with us. It is good to hear comments such as 'you can always talk to a teacher and they will help' and 'we have lots of different opportunities and activities'. You enjoy being involved with your local community but have few opportunities to engage with others across the UK or abroad. We think you would really enjoy that!

You are keen to learn, work hard and are making good progress. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy your work and play. You learn better, however, when you work in small groups rather than as a whole class. In Years 1 to 6 your writing and mathematics work has improved well so you are making good progress. We think that more of you could achieve the higher levels if you had a little more challenge. To make the school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- ensure that children in the Nursery and Reception classes always have work that matches their ability so that they are able to keep up with the rest of the class
- ensure that those of you who learn quickly always have plenty of challenge to stretch those brains
- develop better links with schools and communities in different parts of the UK and overseas so that you can get to know people from different backgrounds.

You can help by continuing to work hard, keeping track of your targets and being ambitious. Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us share your work and play. Please accept our best wishes for the future and continue to enjoy your vibrant, happy school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Read
Lead inspector

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