

Hoole Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134248
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	328864
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Paul Bamber

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hull
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Sharman
Date of previous school inspection	January 2006
School address	Hoole Lane Chester CH2 3HB
Telephone number	01244 323890
Fax number	01244 347335

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils who attend this larger than average school come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most are White British but the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is about average. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. An average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. A considerably larger than average number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than normal. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes. The school has full extended services status and a range of other awards for its promotion of staff welfare, care of the environment, a healthy lifestyle, the arts and sports. It also has the National Parenting Award in recognition of its provision for parent education. The childcare provision on site is run by a private provider and did not form part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides pupils with a satisfactory education. There are strengths in the good start for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in pupils' personal development and well-being and in the quality of care and support pupils receive. Less strong are standards in writing throughout the school, Key Stage 2 pupils' achievements and standards in mathematics, and aspects of leadership and management.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter Reception with expected skills and continue to make good progress up to the end of Year 2, reaching standards which are above average in reading and mathematics, but no better than average in writing. In Key Stage 2, progress is patchier, with pupils making satisfactory progress in reading and writing but achieving less well in mathematics. How well pupils' progress in this key stage reflects the quality of teaching provided. After three years of steady improvement, standards in the current Year 6 are below average but still represents satisfactory progress for these pupils. This can largely be explained by the impact of the high turnover of pupils in this year group, only half of whom joined the school in Reception, the higher than usual proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the considerable disruption to these pupils' learning caused by staff changes when they were in Year 5.

Pupils generally behave well. Some parents disagree and the school acknowledges that until recently parents had cause to be concerned about the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils. This is no longer the case and pupils get on well with each other and are happy to take responsibility as school councillors, play leaders or monitors. They enjoy learning and most show positive attitudes to school. They know how to stay safe and to avoid unnecessary risk. Pupils speak knowledgeably about what constitutes healthy living and participate enthusiastically in those after-school clubs which promote their physical development.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is best when teachers make clear to pupils what they should learn, when lessons move on at a good pace, are relevant and challenging, and when pupils are actively involved. In some lessons and in some subjects, however, teachers' expectations are too low, especially in how much pride pupils should take in spelling correctly and in presenting their work well. In addition, teachers in Key Stage 2 do not always sufficiently consolidate basic numeracy skills nor do they enable pupils to develop effective strategies for solving mathematical problems.

The curriculum enables pupils to develop well personally but academic achievement is no better than satisfactory. There are strengths in art and design, Spanish is taught throughout the school and the school is making some progress in its determination to make links across subjects to help pupils realise that learning is not confined to discrete areas.

A strength of the school is the good quality of care and support provided for its most vulnerable pupils. The school has established effective links with external agencies and specialists that have improved the achievements and behaviour of those pupils at risk of falling well behind and/or who have severe barriers to learning. Dedicated

staff make effective contributions to improving behaviour and attendance and in supporting the less confident or troubled individuals. In contrast, the school is less effective in tracking the progress of different groups of pupils, for example by gender, ethnicity, term of birth or by intervention groups.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory overall. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and this enables it to identify those areas in most need of improvement and then plan accordingly. The headteacher and other senior leaders successfully promote pupils' health and safety, good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' effective personal development. Leaders and managers are less successful in convincing parents that their concerns and suggestions are acted upon, and a significant minority of parents, with some justification, state that they do not get early enough notice about changes to school organisation or routines. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 2**

Many parents understandably praise the good quality of provision and of leadership and management in this key stage. A typical comment is, 'Teachers are dedicated and hard working and consistently create interesting and fun tasks for the children.'

Children enter Reception with broadly expected skills, although somewhat lower in writing and in number recognition. They make good progress as a result of well-planned, effective teaching and support. Adults work together well as a team, assessing children's progress on a daily basis and then discussing and planning children's next steps. Because of this, children thrive, enjoy learning and playing and enter Year 1 having met or exceeded the early learning goals set for them. Their physical and mathematical development is particularly good. Children get on well together, happily sharing and taking turns. They become increasingly independent, for example all children have daily responsibilities that they undertake on a rota basis. Welfare requirements are fully met and children are well cared for and nurtured. A full range of stimulating activities is on offer both in classrooms and in the safe, spacious and well-equipped outdoor area. Close liaison with parents ensures that children's needs are well met and that their learning is supported effectively at home. Very effective leadership ensures good quality learning and support for children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing throughout the school and in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Raise teachers expectations of what pupils can achieve particularly in writing, and in Key Stage 2 so that they fully consolidate pupils' numeracy skills to improve mathematical problem solving skills.
- Implement more rigorous systems to track the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Ensure leaders better relate to and communicate with parents, especially in following up their suggestions and concerns and in informing them about changes to school organisation and routines.

A small proportion of 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

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, so that by the end of Year 2 standards are often above average in reading and mathematics, albeit weaker in writing. In contrast, pupils' achievement and standards in Key Stage 2 have historically been less good. However, over the last three years these have improved year on year, resulting in pupils attaining average standards overall in the 2008 Year 6 national tests. Standards were strongest in science and weakest in mathematics. Boys have usually performed less well than girls. Currently, standards in Year 6 are below average. However, this year group has faced significant barriers to learning and school data show that these pupils made at least satisfactory progress during this academic year, especially in reading. Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics and writing has previously been less good, but boys are now achieving overall standards in line with those of girls. Progress in the current Years 4 and 5 classes is better and standards are higher. The effective support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the sensitive and pragmatic help provided for pupils who are wheelchair bound and the lengths to which the school goes to care for those pupils with considerable behavioural difficulties enable all these pupils to achieve at least as well as their peers both academically and personally. Those few pupils who are at the early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect each other and their environment, embrace pupils of all backgrounds, have a well-developed sense of fair play and willingly contribute to the school community. Pupils are confident, articulate and not afraid to voice their opinions, for example in expressing their disappointment about the reduced number of after-school clubs currently available. The vast majority behave well, although some lose concentration in those lessons that do not fully hold their interest. Attendance is average and has improved over recent years. Pupils take on many responsibilities, for example, to aid the smooth running of the school and to participate in decision making. Older pupils actively encourage younger ones to learn and join in traditional games in the playground. Such activities provide pupils with good personal life skills. However, their preparation for further schooling and for employment is only satisfactory because they leave Year 6 with some gaps in their mathematical and writing skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. There is consistently good or excellent teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In those classes where teachers have high expectations, set tasks that reflect their accurate assessments of what pupils need to do next, and teach at a lively pace, using an interesting range of activities, pupils make good progress. Where less account is taken of pupils' prior attainment, where the pace is somewhat pedestrian and tasks less exciting and relevant, pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, the teaching of mathematics does not always help pupils to consolidate their skills sufficiently well. A strength common to all lessons is the good quality relationships that exist between adults and pupils. This is particularly supportive of the more vulnerable, less confident pupils or those who find learning more difficult. Teachers' marking is generally helpful in informing pupils how to improve and in a few cases pupils are successfully encouraged to assess their own and other pupils' work. However, marking does not reflect high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting nor of the accuracy of their spelling.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well but meets their academic needs only satisfactorily. The programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education is well taught and results in positive outcomes for pupils. There is some specialist teaching in physical education that has promoted pupils' physical development and skills well. The school basketball team's impending appearance in a national final is testament to this good provision. There are residential visits which contribute well to pupils' self-confidence, independence and their ability to work in a team and to get along together. The number and range of extra-curricular activities are limited. Planning for teaching mixed-age classes is thorough in ensuring that all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered but in some cases insufficient account is taken of the needs of pupils of different abilities and ages. This partly accounts for different rates of pupils' progress. The curriculum effectively meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For those who are gifted and talented there is some specialist teaching, for example in music and dance, and occasionally academically gifted pupils link up with their peers from other schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very good quality care, support and personal guidance provided, especially for more vulnerable pupils, is a strength of the school. As a result, these pupils have full access to the same opportunities as all others. They are also enabled to achieve satisfactorily and in some cases well, both personally and academically.

The school ensures that all requirements are met as regards child protection, the vetting of adults who work with pupils and procedures to promote health and safety. This results in pupils feeling safe and reassured that if worried there is someone to

turn to. There are good arrangements for transition between classes and key stages and the school warmly welcomes the higher than average number of pupils who join the school mid-term or at the beginning of the year. Although pupils' progress is tracked carefully, the school has little firm data about the progress made by different groups of pupils. As such the quality of academic guidance is no better than satisfactory and has some weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Strong aspects of leadership and management include the effective promotion of pupils' personal development and the good quality of care and support provided. Less strong are the impact of leaders and managers on improving standards and achievement in Key Stage 2, and communications and relationships with some parents.

Senior leaders have ensured that issues since the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily. However, the steady rather than rapid pace of improvement since then and relative weaknesses in Key Stage 2 pupils' standards indicate a satisfactory rather than, as the school judges, good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher delegates considerable responsibility to other senior leaders and middle managers. This has enabled staff to develop leadership skills and to influence improvements in pupils' standards and achievement and in provision. Rapid improvement has been curtailed by considerable staff turnover recently which has caused a lack of continuity in some senior positions and in middle management. The school promotes community cohesion well. Within the school and local community it is very evident. Pupils are involved with community projects and activities, and in fundraising. The school offers working parents a service which enables their children to be looked after before and after school and during some of the school holidays. It organises parents' workshops and drop-ins and the school's close partnership with a local community women's refuge illustrates its success in providing opportunities to pupils from a whole range of circumstances and to eliminate discrimination. Close links with local churches also promote pupils' spiritual development well.

Governance is satisfactory. Some governors are involved with and supportive of the school's work but the governing body is not as well placed as it might be to challenge the school's performance.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

¹ Grade 1 – Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 – Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 – Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 – Exceptionally low.

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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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



13 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hoole Church of England Primary School, Chester, CH2 3HB

I would like to thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. It was a delight to hear your views and to join in with your learning.

Hoole gives you a satisfactory education. There are some things that are good. One of these is the way in which the school encourages you to grow into polite, generally well-behaved and responsible young people. Another is the care and support that all the adults give you. You all benefit from this, but especially those of you who find learning more difficult than most, those of you who are not as mobile as others and those of you who find it hard to behave sensibly. Children in Reception get off to a good start.

Part of my job is to point out to the school ways in which it could be better. To help with this I have asked the adults who run the school to do the following.

- Make sure that you all improve your writing right through the school and that in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 you do better in mathematics.
- Make sure that teachers are a bit stricter with you about spelling correctly and improving your handwriting.
- Keep a closer watch on how well different groups of children are getting on, for example the boys or those who were born at different times of the year.
- Make sure that the adults who run the school always follow up the suggestions and worries that your parents have and that they keep them better informed about changes that are going to happen in school.

Thank you again for your welcome. Please try to carry on working as hard as you can and enjoying learning.

Paul Bamber
Lead inspector