

Cronton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104449
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308604
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Rimmer
Headteacher	Mrs Sylvia Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Smithy Lane Cronton Widnes Cheshire WA8 5DF
Telephone number	0151 424 3881
Fax number	0151 420 5398

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of mixed housing in a village on the outskirts of Widnes. The proportions of pupils eligible for a free school meal, belonging to minority ethnic groups or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are all below average. The headteacher is new to the school and in the first term of her appointment. The school has received a number of awards including Investors in People and the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cronton Church of England Primary is a good school which serves its community well. It provides good value for money. Good leadership and management combined with good teaching and learning result in pupils' good achievement and well above average standards by the time they leave the school. The school cares for its pupils well and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Parents appreciate greatly the education and care provided for their children and these feelings are summed up in comments such as, 'Cronton Church of England is an excellent school. My three children have all thrived during their time there. I have always been happy with the school over the last ten years.'

Most children enter the Nursery with broadly average skills and they make consistently good progress as they move through the school. Teachers' planning is good and lessons are managed effectively. Pupils are well supported in their learning by experienced and capable teaching assistants. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are exemplary. This is because they are well cared for and find lessons interesting and enjoyable. The school rigorously maintains precise records of pupils' achievement and uses the information well to ensure that they sustain good rates of progress. Whilst there are examples of particularly effective marking of pupils' work that show clearly what their next steps in learning should be, this provision is not yet consistently applied through the school. In addition to promoting the pupils' basic skills, the good quality curriculum places a strong emphasis on the development of both modern foreign languages and pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

The headteacher has a clear vision of how to sustain the school's current strengths and build upon them for the future. She is well supported by a newly constituted and knowledgeable senior leadership team. Together, they have already identified steps to improve pupils' skills in assessing their own work. The newly established team has the confidence of a well informed governing body. The school has made good progress since its last inspection. All key issues identified for development have been addressed effectively and pupils' standards have continued to rise. Under its new leadership, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress in all six areas of learning, especially in relation to their personal and social development, which is particularly strong. This good overall progress enables most pupils to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. From their earliest days in school they are encouraged to develop independence in their learning and in coping with their personal needs. They enjoy coming to school and settle quickly into the routines, well supported by the good induction procedures into the Nursery and transition through to Reception. Children are safe and secure and use the good outdoor facilities well to climb and play imaginatively. They are readily able to share and take turns, and they form good quality relationships with adults and with other children. The Foundation Stage provision is led effectively and children's progress is monitored with care. Knowledgeable teaching assistants and other adults support the learning environment well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a consistent approach to teachers' marking so that pupils know what to do next to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards in the national tests and assessments are above average for pupils at the ages of seven and well above average by the age of eleven in all subjects. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 from their broadly average standards when they first start school. In Years 3 to 6, pupils also make good progress and their writing develops particularly well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. They make good progress and frequently work at the same tasks as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to all the work of the school. The school building is itself the Mission Church of its local community and it provides a central focus for many within the community. Pupils respond extremely positively to staff's efforts to make them feel valued, by displaying exemplary behaviour, very positive relationships and attitudes and by their very high attendance levels excellently supported by the learning mentor. Pupils' clearly enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and secure, know how to keep themselves healthy and contribute well to the school and wider community. The school council is active in the life of the school and in the locality and through this work, pupils are gaining a good understanding of skills which will assist them well in adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because they are well taught. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils demonstrate high levels of enjoyment, as in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, and mature thinking, seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson focused on Evacuees. Throughout the school pupils show positive attitudes to their work and they cooperate well with each other. Planning of lessons is good and includes clear indications of what is expected for pupils' of differing abilities. Teachers manage pupils well, so little time is lost between activities. They use interactive whiteboards skilfully to help pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are well briefed and they support pupils effectively, especially so in group work. Some teachers mark work exceptionally well, as, for example, in literacy in Year 4. This ensures pupils have a clear indication of how to improve their work. However, this high quality does not yet extend consistently throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well and is enriched effectively by visits and visitors. It includes a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils, and there are residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6. There is a particular strength in the provision of modern foreign language teaching with pupils having the opportunity to learn Spanish and German. This encourages enjoyment in the learning of languages and develops the pupils' speaking and listening skills well. Pupils develop their ICT skills well across a wide range of subjects. The high priority given to the provision of physical education adds positively to the pupils' knowledge of how to keep healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision is particularly strong in the care it offers to the pupils. They know this and respond to it very well. It promotes confidence in their learning and adds significantly to the high quality of the pupils' personal well-being. Parents appreciate greatly the caring atmosphere of the school and record overwhelming satisfaction in their responses to and support of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and included in all the school's activities. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place. The tracking of pupils' individual progress is rigorous and assists the school to develop challenging individual targets for the pupils to aim for. In some classes pupils are actively involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers, giving them effective insights on how to improve, but such good practice is not yet consistently evident throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has made a very effective start in her new role. She has rapidly established a well balanced and enthusiastic leadership team which is knowledgeable and articulate about the school's needs and future priorities. The school has an accurate picture of its current position and has a good plan for identifying areas for development. It has already started to consider ways in which pupils may be involved more actively in assessing their own work. The learning environment is managed effectively to ensure that all pupils are challenged fully and included in all activities. There are good links with parents and outside agencies. The staff are deployed effectively to promote the good personal and academic development for the pupils, and governors have a good knowledge of the school, support it well and challenge it appropriately.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Cronton Church of England Primary School, Widnes,
WA8 5DF

My colleague and I really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you very much for your very warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around school. Particular thanks should go to members of the school council who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much.

We do not think you will be surprised to hear that we judge that Cronton Church of England Primary School is a good school. This is because it cares for you well, helps you to make good progress in your work and enables you to enjoy yourselves very much. We particularly liked the way you got on with each other and were impressed at the wide range of work that you do so well. I shall remember particularly well a Year 6 literacy lesson in which you were thinking about Evacuees and some of your wonderful storytelling in Year 4.

One of our jobs is to look for things which will make your school even better and help you more with your work. We think some of the marking of your work is really good, particularly so when teachers help you to think about what you need to do next to make your work even better. We noticed that these marking procedures are more detailed in some classes than in others so we have asked your headteacher and teachers to see if they can make that more consistent throughout the school.

We send you all our best wishes for the future. We hope you continue to enjoy your learning as much as you do at the moment.