

Phoenix Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133702
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	360574
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Sweeney
Headteacher	Mr Chris Muscatelli
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
School address	Birchfield Road Liverpool Merseyside L7 9LY
Telephone number	0151 228 3831
Fax number	0151 475 2705
Email address	phoenixp-ht@phoenix-pri.liverpool.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2011
Inspection number	360574

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited twelve lessons and observed the work of eight teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including curriculum and lesson plans, safeguarding policies and action plans, minutes of the governing body's meetings, development plans and the school's assessment records. Time was given to the scrutiny of pupils' books from all year groups. Sixty-eight parental questionnaire returns were analysed, together with a sample from Key Stage 2 pupils and school staff.

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

- Whether attainment is rising, particularly for potentially vulnerable pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are of high ability.
- The effectiveness of the measures the school has adopted to improve attendance rates.
- Whether teaching and the use of assessment information are providing pupils with sufficiently challenging and enjoyable learning experiences.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than others of a similar type. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is also high. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic minority backgrounds is higher than in most primary schools. Many start at the school at an early stage of learning English. A high proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school at times other than the beginning or end of an academic year. There is an on-site special educational needs assessment unit which is not managed by the governing body. It is subject to a separate inspection. The school has several awards, including Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Sports Activemark and the Liverpool Inclusion award.

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 quality of learning and the rate of progress seen in lessons and in pupils' books are good overall. They are outstanding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This judgement is confirmed by the school's rigorous and accurate monitoring and assessment information. Attainment, although low, has improved markedly since the start of the academic year and the gap with the national average is narrowing fast.

Policies and systems for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are excellent and are rigorously applied, monitored and reviewed. Staff and the governing body receive up-to-date training on child protection, and safe working is evident in all aspects of their work. Pupils say they feel extremely safe and at ease in school. The school's work with agencies and services is highly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are potentially vulnerable. The result is that they make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Excellent links with the on-site assessment unit, particularly at the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure that there is early identification of such pupils' needs and that appropriate strategies are in place to meet them.

Pupils contribute to their school and the local community through helping to care for the younger ones, through fund-raising activities and by putting on music and drama productions. Pupils understand the factors that could be a risk to health, they eat nutritious snacks and lunches and they take plenty of exercise.

There have been significant recent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the level of challenge in the work pupils do and the extent to which they enjoy learning. There are inconsistencies, however, in the way in which pupils are informed about the progress they are making against their individual learning targets and in the use of time to develop their speaking skills. Overall attendance rates are below average but improving because of the effectiveness of the school's approach in following up on absences and supporting families. In such a small school, the absence of a few pupils can significantly affect the overall picture.

Rising attainment generally and the excellent progress of the above named groups of pupils, the strong collaborative working amongst staff, the highly effective leadership team, accurate self-evaluation and good development planning demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve standards, raise attendance levels and ensure that teaching is consistently good.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across the school by consolidating and building upon the recent rapid and secure improvements in the quality of pupils' learning and their rates of progress.
- Ensure that the drive to improve attendance remains high on the school's agenda by maintaining the current rigour and persistence in following up on persistent absentees and by providing them with encouragement and support when they are in school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - pupils are taught to evaluate their own progress against their individual learning targets
 - for key pieces of work, marking clearly evaluates the progress pupils have made against those learning targets
 - pupils explain 'how' and 'why' they have arrived at an answer or formed a view, and are encouraged to discuss their work with the whole class to develop their speaking skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school and this is borne out in every questionnaire returned by parents and carers. Pupils worked enthusiastically in all the lessons seen. They talked animatedly about their learning, the many trips away and the well-attended, after-school activities. All groups make at least good progress from a very low starting point on entry to the school, and some groups, for example, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, make exceptional progress. The standard of work seen in lessons and in books has improved, particularly for able pupils and they are making good progress. Those in Year 6 are on course to attain at above average levels in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests.

Although improving, overall attainment is low and pupils are not being fully prepared for the next stage in their education. There are a few pupils who are persistently absent. In some cases this is because of their need for extensive medical treatment and in such a small school their unavoidable absences can adversely affect the overall attendance rates. Those rates are improving, particularly for the more vulnerable pupils, because they respond positively to the excellent support and encouragement they receive. The school's development and action plans show that improving attendance remains a priority. Pupils' art work and their drama productions and music making show that they are making good progress in their creative development. Pupils behave well and show consideration and respect for others. They work independently and collaboratively. They make good use of information and communication technology for learning. Pupils are not developing self-assessment skills and a minority of pupils lack the confidence and fluency to explain their thinking at length or how they have arrived at an answer and to enter into discussions with the class as a whole.

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

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	4
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Most of the teaching seen, including the work of the teaching assistants, was good and some was outstanding. Expectations were high and pupils responded positively and with enjoyment to challenging learning activities. One Year 6 pupil said that the best thing about the school was that the work was hard. A calm and purposeful atmosphere prevails in lessons. On the rare occasions that a pupil has difficulty adjusting to classroom discipline he or she is managed and supported well and the learning of others is not disrupted. The overall use of assessment information in planning lessons, the assessment of how well pupils are learning during lessons and the oral feedback they receive are good. In the many books seen, teachers' marking does not evaluate pupils' progress against their individual learning targets, nor are they providing opportunities for pupils to do this for themselves. Opportunities are missed to challenge pupils in lessons to explain their thinking at length and to encourage whole-class discussions to develop their speaking skills.

Curricular provision for the development of pupils' personal, social and emotional is excellent, enabling potentially vulnerable pupils to make rapid progress in their personal development. Opportunities for pupils to work creatively are extensive. There is a wide range of interesting enrichment activities after lessons and in the local community and a programme of trips away to promote pupils' enjoyment of learning and build their confidence and self-reliance. The school monitors absences rigorously and works closely

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

with parents and outside agencies to improve attendance. As a result it is rising. This improvement is testimony to the school's work to raise aspirations and alert pupils to future opportunities, thus enabling them to make the best out of what it provides.

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 drive for improvement stumbled in 2010 because of unavoidable staffing difficulties at a senior level. These have been resolved and the drive for improvement resumed. The difficulties drew leaders and managers together as a tight and effective team, determined to do even better. Morale is high. The induction and support afforded to teachers new to the school has enabled them to make a significant contribution to pupils' good and at times outstanding progress.

The governing body knows the school well, monitors performance and is closely involved in setting the agenda for improvement. It is rigorous in its oversight of safeguarding arrangements. Policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis and up-dated. Safe recruitment practices are used. Staff, governors and volunteers are trained in child protection. There is safe working evident throughout the school and very good risk assessment procedures for trips away. The school is committed to an equal chance for every boy and girl, evident in the good, and for some, outstanding progress being made. Extensive arrangements with partner institutions, with the special educational assessment unit and with agencies and services ensure that those pupils most at risk of underachievement are supported exceptionally well and make at least good progress. The school is a harmonious working community. It is highly effective in reaching out to parents and carers to help them support their children's education, for example, through the 'Dads Week' and the use of home/school diaries for the younger children. These links with partner institutions and parents and carers, together with pupils' charitable work and cultural activities, make a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. Many parents and carers attend the Friday celebration assemblies and there were several who met with inspectors to say how good their school is. The school gives good value for money.

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

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
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

When they start school, children's levels of skills and understanding vary but overall they are very low compared to what would normally be expected for their age. This is particularly apparent in their personal, social, emotional and language development. They settle quickly and are soon happy and secure because of the close links with parents and carers and the setting's warm and welcoming atmosphere. Staff work effectively with the on-site assessment unit to share expertise in assessing and meeting the needs of potentially vulnerable children, particularly those with complex learning needs. Children progress well and by the start of Year 1 close the gap somewhat with national norms, although attainment remains below average. This good progress is because teachers and other adults have a good understanding of how children learn and provide varied and interesting learning activities. The effective use of key workers ensures that the needs of all groups are met. The indoor and outdoor learning environments are stimulating and provide extensive opportunities for children to make their own choices and discover new learning independently. They also enjoy working and playing together. Staff are committed to the children's welfare and development and their concern for safety is evident in all daily routines. Children have happy and smiling faces and talk eagerly about what they have been doing.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

Just over a third of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. The vast majority were supportive of the school and expressed appreciation for the care and support their children receive. All returns indicated that children enjoy school. The very small number of concerns raised related to individual issues and there was no pattern of dissatisfaction. Several parents and carers asked to speak to inspectors to convey how pleased they were with their children's progress.

The few concerns raised were drawn to the attention of the leadership team without compromising confidentiality.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Phoenix 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 178 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	69	21	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	72	18	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	56	26	38	1	1	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	56	29	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	63	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	57	26	38	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	53	30	44	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)	28	41	32	47	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	59	24	35	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	47	30	44	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	50	27	40	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	38	56	26	38	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	66	20	29	0	0	1	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 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 2009/10 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.



28 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix Primary School, Liverpool, L7 9LY

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We appreciated the time so many of you gave to talk to us. You made a valuable contribution to the inspection.

You attend a good school. The standards you reach are low but they are improving because of your hard work and good behaviour and the support you receive from your teachers and the assistants. We saw that you are making good progress in lessons and some of you are progressing at a very rapid rate. We have asked that progress is improved even further so that standards rise.

You told us how safe you feel in school. That sense of security and well-being is because adults are always ready to help you with problems and because of the good arrangements to provide you with support and care. Staff work closely with others outside school to get the specialist help that some of you need.

There are a very few pupils whose attendance is not as good as that of the vast majority. We know that for a small number of these it is because of medical problems. We have asked the school to make sure that the measures in place to improve the attendance of the other absentees are always used as rigorously as they are now. Most of you can play your part by continuing to attend regularly.

There are ways in every school to make learning better. We have asked that you learn how to judge your progress against your targets and that teachers' marking helps you in this by giving you clear pointers on how well you are doing. We have also asked that you are given more opportunities in lessons to discuss work as a whole class.

Thank you again for being so helpful and welcoming. Our best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.