

Beechwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111175
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	395438
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead inspector	Joanne Olsson HMI

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clair Hallsworth
Headteacher	Lynne Finn
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Her Majesty's Inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons led by five teachers. The inspector visited classrooms also to observe the teaching of reading and mathematics. The inspector observed pupils at play and during lunchtime and heard pupils read. Meetings were held with different groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, and senior leaders and managers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' books. She considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils, and 50 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. The overwhelming majority of pupils is of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than found nationally and no pupils speak English as an additional language. There are fewer pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than found nationally. The proportion of pupils supported at School Action Plus, or with a statement of special educational need is higher than found in other schools. The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

There is out-of-hours provision, a pre-school and private day-care provision for 0-4 year-olds on the school site. They are not managed by the governing body and are subject to separate inspections.

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and three new members of the teaching staff have taken up post. The school has received the Arts Mark Gold Award, ICT Mark and Primary Quality Mark. It has received national accreditation as a 'Thinking School'.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Its success lies in a shared passion to equip pupils with the tools to learn for themselves and a common drive to promote lifelong learning. The ‘thinking school’ ethos pervades all aspects of school life and accounts for highly reflective leaders, managers, teachers, and pupils. Most parents and carers would recommend this school to others. Pupils’ achievement in English, particularly writing, is stronger than in mathematics.
- Pupils’ achievement is outstanding. They make rapid progress in their learning because of their exceptional ability to think, to reason and to work independently. From lower-than-expected starting points, pupils reach attainment levels which, typically, match the national average. Small cohorts and a higher proportion of high-level learning needs account for fluctuations in attainment levels. They explain the dip in achievement in 2011 also.
- Outstanding teaching is underpinned by positive relationships and a shared understanding of how pupils learn. Effective teaching strategies are firmly embedded and applied systematically across the school. A whole-school focus on pupils’ calculation skills is bearing fruit. However, not all of those activities are matched precisely enough to pupils’ needs.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary on a day-to-day basis and over time. The pupils’ excellent attitudes to learning mean lessons run smoothly. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not happen at their school and they have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- All leaders and managers are highly effective in driving improvement. Consequently, the strengths noted at the previous inspection have been maintained and built on. The imaginative curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils’ outstanding spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are outstanding because teaching is highly effective across all classes and subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in mathematics further by:
 - ensuring that the activities provided to sharpen pupils' understanding of number and calculations are matched precisely to the needs of all pupils
 - enabling pupils to record their findings from mathematical activities in their books formally, so that their presentation improves and they can learn from their mistakes
 - developing the quality of teachers' marking in mathematics, so that pupils receive greater guidance on how to reach their goals.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

'We have to work hard, but learning is always fun' is a typical comment from pupils, who agree unanimously they learn a lot at school. Pupils enjoy their learning thoroughly because they are actively involved and it has purpose. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils offered legitimate arguments in a debate. They spoke with confidence and countered opposing views because they can reason and apply their prior learning. Inspection evidence shows that that is typical learning on a day-to-day basis. Pupils' achievement stands out because pupils leave Year 6 with exceptionally well-developed thinking skills, curious minds, and an outstanding ability to work independently. In short, pupils learn how to learn. Consequently, they are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Most children enter Reception Year with skills and knowledge lower than the levels expected for their age. Some children have much lower than expected reading, writing, and mathematical skills. They make rapid progress throughout the school to reach attainment levels which are typically in line with the national average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress in English, particularly writing, is exceptional, leading to above-average attainment. Early reading and writing skills are developed very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Older pupils write with flair and imagination. Pupils read with confidence and enjoyment. Despite a dip in 2011, current data show pupils' attainment in reading is broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Although pupils apply mathematical knowledge skilfully to solve problems, some pupils have weak number formation and presentation skills. Pupils are not always able to reflect and learn from their mistakes because they do not record their work formally often enough in their mathematics books.

All pupils achieve very well over time, so there are no marked differences between different groups. Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational make equally strong gains in their learning as others because their needs are met well. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers is confident that pupils make good progress.

Quality of teaching

Pupils, parents, and carers agree unanimously that teaching is good. Teaching is never less than good on a day-to-day basis and most teaching is exceptional. It stands out because all teachers are very skilled at equipping pupils with the tools to learn for themselves. Teachers are very effective at linking learning to relevant contexts and providing pupils with practical

activities to solve problems. Consequently, learning is purposeful and classrooms 'buzz' with pupils' excitement and enthusiasm. For example, a Year 5 mathematics lesson captured pupils' interest completely because they were absorbed in finding the best angle to pot snooker balls successfully. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils, but ensure that learning is personalised to meet individual needs. Effective questioning and well-planned shared sessions at the end of each lesson mean that teachers probe pupils' understanding, reinforce new learning and pick up any misconceptions swiftly. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs flourish in this environment. They are fully included in learning activities and supported appropriately by skilled teaching assistants.

The innovative curriculum is well planned to enable teachers to develop pupils' lifelong learning skills systematically. That means that even the youngest pupils are able to think about and offer reasoned responses to open-ended questions. As a result, teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural understanding exceptionally well. Subjects are linked seamlessly, so pupils use their basic skills for a range of purposes. A whole-school focus on number and calculation is bearing fruit. That was evident in the Reception class, as children added numbers together confidently, while singing along to a jingle. All pupils benefit from such sessions, but not all activities are matched precisely to the needs of all pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to use a range of tools to record the outcome of their learning. That means pupils' information communication and technology skills (ICT) are very strong and they are confident and articulate speakers. Teachers provide effective guidance to help pupils make strong progress in writing. The practice is less well developed for mathematics.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils live up to the school motto consistently. In 'thinking for themselves and caring for others', pupils make an exceptional contribution to a safe and highly positive school environment. Pupils take ownership of their own behaviour, so that adults need to intervene rarely and learning is not disrupted. Their behaviour outside of the classroom is equally strong. That was evident during assembly time. No one takes advantage of the whole-school moving to the hall and even the very youngest children enter and leave assembly in a respectful and sensible manner. Almost all pupils and most parents and carers agree that behaviour in the school and in lessons is good. Detailed school records show behaviour is exemplary on a day-to-day basis. It is improving over time, so exclusions have reduced and are lower than found nationally. Pupils' obvious enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance rates, which have been maintained for a number of years.

Pupils, parents, and carers agree unanimously that pupils feel safe at school. Almost all pupils and the large majority of parents and carers say bullying is dealt with effectively. A very small minority disagrees with this view. School records confirm there are few allegations of bullying and that these are investigated fully. Different groups of pupils say that bullying does not happen in the school. As one pupil commented, 'we are 100% bully free!' Pupils know they can rely on the adults in the school to listen to and deal with their concerns. Pupils have a strong understanding of different types of bullying. They know why homophobic and racist name-calling is wrong. They have a well-developed sense of how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils talk with conviction of what they do to protect themselves from cyber-bullying and the risk of giving in to peer pressure outside of school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has successfully minimised the potential barriers of being a small school by harnessing the skills and expertise of all leaders and managers. That means that they all play a full part in driving improvement by leading staff training, modelling lessons and monitoring their areas of responsibility. Leadership and management stand out because the school is constantly striving to improve by exploiting current research and good practice found locally, nationally and globally. New initiatives are evaluated carefully before they are introduced, to ensure that they meet the needs of the school. Consistent and highly-effective teaching strategies are embedded because leaders and managers take an action research approach, which means they monitor, review and adapt constantly to ensure school actions are making a difference to pupils' learning. Teachers receive timely and expert feedback on their performance and appropriate professional development to help them hone their teaching skills.

The systems to monitor the work of the school are highly effective because they are operated frequently and take account of a broad range of evidence. Consequently, school self-evaluation is accurate and planned actions to secure further improvement are tailored sharply to key priorities. The systems, coupled with the school's successful track record, indicate that the capacity for improvement is excellent. Members of the governing body provide well-informed challenge and support because they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Performance data are used effectively to drive school improvement and to identify pupils at risk of underperforming. That means that there is little variation in the achievement of groups. As there are few incidents of harassment, the school's provision for equality of opportunity is strong. Safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements.

The imaginative curriculum is planned carefully to meet the needs of mixed-age classes which change year on year. A skills-based approach delivered through exciting contexts means that pupils' progression is tracked carefully, but provision is flexible, so that pupils can work at their own level on whole-school topics. That was clearly evident as children in Reception Year and pupils in Key Stage 1 explored the seaside together. Pupils accessed a wide range of lively activities involving all three classes which enabled them to deepen their understanding of the past. Rich and memorable experiences such as those are enhanced effectively through regular 'Excellence Weeks' and a range of visits and visitors.

The curriculum, in conjunction with exceptional teaching and pupils' strong personal qualities, makes a significant contribution to the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The pupils' love of learning is harnessed successfully. They have ample opportunity to ponder real-life questions, to explore different faiths and religions and to think for themselves. That was clearly evident in a Year 3 and 4 lesson, in which pupils raised and responded articulately to questions such as 'is money more important than friends?'

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



12 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beechwood Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2TT

I enjoyed meeting so many of you when I came to inspect your school recently. Thank you for being so polite and friendly. So many of you chatted to me around school and held doors open for me that I felt very welcome. I spent a lot of time looking at your work, watching your lessons and listening to your views. That helped me to decide that you attend an outstanding school. These are some of the main things I found out about your school:

- Your achievement is outstanding. You make rapid progress across the school to reach the levels expected for your age. Your achievement in English is very strong.
- I was very impressed with how well you work to solve problems on your own. You think deeply about issues and you are very good at using what you know already to tackle new challenges.
- You are very proud of your school and enjoy your learning. I know that because so many of you told me Beechwood 'is the best school in the world'.
- You think teachers make you work hard, but that your learning is always fun. You think you make good progress and are reaching your goals.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. You have a very good understanding of what being bullied means and you say bullying does not happen at your school. You know how to keep yourself safe outside of school.

I have asked the people in charge to do a few things to help you make as much progress in mathematics as you do in English. I have asked them to make sure you record more of your mathematics work in your books and that your 'Monster Maths' sessions always target the areas you each need support with. It was a pleasure to meet all of you. Please accept my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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