

Belle Vale Community Primary School

Besford Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L25 2QF

Inspection dates 31 October–1 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not yet good because

- Pupils' achievement from their starting points requires improvement. Pupils do not make good enough progress in Years 1 to 6. As a result, standards, although improving overall in 2012, remain below average when pupils leave the school.
- Too much teaching requires improvement. Overall, teaching lacks inspiration and challenge for pupils of all abilities and teachers often spend too long talking at the pupils rather than involving them in exciting and purposeful learning.
- The marking of pupils' work by teachers and other adults does not give precise enough guidance on how pupils can improve. Comments in pupils' books made by teaching assistants do not always give a good example of how to write English.
- Behaviour is of variable quality. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They speak with confidence about their school and acknowledge the care and support they receive from many of the adults but because of the lacklustre teaching pupils become easily distracted.
- The impact of leaders and managers on raising achievement by improving the quality teaching is inconsistent.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to improve its performance.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- Attendance has improved markedly over recent years.
- Standards in mathematics have improved recently.
- The school is a safe and supportive place in which pupils feel cared for well.
- Pupils speak well of the improvements they have seen since the arrival of the new headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed nine teachers teaching 11 lessons. Two lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and again when the inspectors briefly revisited each class on the second day.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair and the vice-chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors analysed staff questionnaire responses and spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. No responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available for inspectors when planning the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including; the recent whole-school review undertaken by the local authority, data on pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, the school development plan, records of monitoring the quality of teaching, records of behaviour and attendance, and documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Peter Cox, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Loughlin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school. It has experienced a reduction in the number of pupils attending over the last three years due to the decreasing birth rate in the local area.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is twice that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and those supported at school action plus is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is more than twice that seen nationally.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of those whose first language is not English is very small when compared with the national picture.
- A breakfast club is provided by the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the quality of teaching is at least good and increasingly outstanding so that pupils' progress throughout the school is at least good and standards at least match those attained nationally by:
 - reducing the time teachers spend talking and involve pupils more quickly in purposeful, active and exciting learning, thus reducing their lack of involvement in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants share good practice more widely across the school and avoid fundamental errors in written English when marking pupils' work
 - providing activities that are more closely matched to pupils' learning needs
 - teaching the skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation in a structured way in order to improve the quality of pupils' written work
 - giving pupils good advice through teachers' marking about how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality and impact of some senior and middle leaders by:
 - holding them fully accountable for the continued improvement of performance in their areas of responsibility, including raising the quality of teaching throughout the school
 - providing clearer methods of checking on pupils' progress and reporting this information to parents with more clarity
 - making sure the information about how well pupils are doing is reliable and used well by teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school with skills that are typically below those expected for their age. Throughout the Nursery and Reception classes most children make good progress, which prepares them well for starting Year 1.
- At the last inspection, pupils' overall attainment was judged to be low. Improvements have been made and according to the school's own data for 2012, results show that at the end of Key Stage 1 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen, although it remains below average.
- Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012 had improved because the school put a great deal of effort and resources into improving mathematics. However, this proved to be at the expense of English, where standards slipped. The combined attainment in English and mathematics has improved but when compared to the national picture attainment remains below average.
- Overall, fewer pupils than nationally make the progress expected of them, or do better, across Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics but this picture varies. For example, the proportion of pupils making the rate of progress they should in English, while an improvement on 2011, was below the national average but in mathematics, a higher proportion made the progress expected than seen nationally.
- Currently, progress in lessons is showing signs of improvement because of a limited amount of good or better teaching but this is not the case throughout the school, and in too many lessons pupils' learning still requires improvement. Overall, progress is not good because too much teaching is uninspiring.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs perform better than other groups of pupils in the school but not as well as their counterparts nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Too much teaching fails to excite or motivate pupils to make good progress.
- During the inspection, some good teaching was seen and a little outstanding teaching was observed. In the best lessons, skilful questioning by the teacher helps check on pupils' understanding and often contributes to successful learning outcomes. Pupils generally know what they are expected to achieve because teachers give them clear criteria to measure their learning against and refer to these during the lesson.
- However, in some lessons, the activities that teachers plan are not well enough matched to pupils' differing abilities. Too much time is spent by the whole class listening to the teacher rather than being actively involved in learning. Activities provided for more-able pupils do not always challenge or interest them sufficiently well. Pupils are eager to learn and show much enthusiasm when the teaching captures their interest. For example, when a Year 4 class used information and communication technology (ICT) to explore the origins of chocolate and prepared an audio-visual presentation to give to others pupils.
- Teaching assistants often take an active part in lessons and support those pupils needing help. However, some of their comments in pupils' books provide a poor example of written English. Furthermore these errors go unchecked by teachers.
- Marking and written feedback are not used consistently well enough by teachers to give pupils advice on how they can improve their work.
- The skills of writing, particularly spelling, grammar and punctuation, are not taught consistently well enough. There is also too little emphasis on challenging more-able pupils to write complex sentences.

- The pupils heard reading did so with some enthusiasm. Those older pupils of a higher ability read with accuracy and with an appreciation of the context of the story and understanding of the characters. The majority of older pupils understand the benefits of being able to read and how it can lead to future prosperity. They can give reasons to read and read a range of different materials outside school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils are welcoming and friendly. They are polite and considerate towards each other, adults and visitors to the school. Pupils feel very safe and cared for in school and their parents echoed this when spoken to during the day. Pupils and parents appreciate the recently refurbished entrance to the school and improved security.
- Attitudes towards learning require improvement because pupils become distracted when teachers talk for too long. Pupils tell of having to sit and listen for long periods and are eager to begin their learning much sooner.
- Bullying and racist incidents are uncommon. Pupils get on well together during break and lunchtimes and cooperate willingly with each other in lessons. Any issues are resolved quickly and effectively.
- Pupils enjoy the variety of opportunities available to them to act as 'monitors', including returning class registers to the school office and organising the music during assemblies. Their enjoyment in coming to school is reflected by their improved attendance, which is now consistently above average.
- During an outstanding assembly, led by the headteacher, pupils' behaviour throughout was exemplary. Pupils entered the hall quietly and listened attentively to the music being played which set the scene for a reflective and highly appropriate session on the importance of friendship.
- Pupils speak well of the recent increase in visitors to the school, such as firemen and dentists who offer pupils advice on how to look after themselves.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance. They are proud to belong to the school and appreciate what teachers and adults do for them, one summing up the views of many saying 'school is fun, safe and everyone respects each other'.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school has improved since the last inspection. The overall improved achievement, while uneven, is now more secure and the low attendance has been eradicated.
- The newly appointed headteacher has a very clear view of how successful the school can be. In the short time since taking up her appointment, she has recognised and set the correct priorities and in conjunction with the governing body is setting about making improvements with purpose and tenacity.
- The variability in the quality of leadership and management has been identified by the headteacher. She recognises that the management of performance and holding leaders and managers accountable for their areas of responsibility have not been strong enough and is taking robust action to address these issues.
- Senior leaders and the governing body recognise the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching but planned actions to tackle these are still in the early stages of bearing fruit. Training opportunities are being offered to improve teaching by sharing best practice within the school and also from other providers.
- A system for checking on pupils' progress is in place and shows the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils make equally good progress. However, there has been too great a focus on developing a particular teaching style rather than focusing on what progress pupils actually make in lessons.
- Reports to parents are cumbersome and lack sharpness in conveying the important messages on

how their children are progressing against targets. The comments written by teachers are not always as helpful as they could be.

- The curriculum provides sufficient opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is some evidence that this is reinforced in their topic work seen in classroom and corridor displays. However, this is not a feature of everyday learning.
- Staff who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the school and were proud to belong to it.
- The schools arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has offered effective support, helping the school to identify what is working well and what still needs to improve.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a very accurate understanding of the school's performance. It has set the right course for securing the necessary improvements. Together with the headteacher, the new Chair of the Governing Body and the vice chair have refocused the school priorities on pupils' achievement, driven by high quality teaching. The governing body is very supportive of the school and its place within the community. It understands its legal responsibilities and ensures that resources are managed well, for example, it keeps a close watch on how the pupil premium funding is being spent to ensure value for money.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104519
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400722

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Dennis
Headteacher	Mrs Janette Walker
Date of previous school inspection	November 2009
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