

Birchfields Primary School

Lytham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6PL

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils behave extremely well. They are proud of their school, enjoy learning and feel very safe.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good and sometimes outstanding progress from low and often very low starting points. This is because teaching in this key stage is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve well. Achievement has improved and most pupils now reach broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- The warm, strong and supportive relationships which exist throughout the school help pupils to thrive.
- Teachers and support staff work effectively together to ensure that pupils are supported sensitively and skilfully. This helps all pupils, including those who are new to speaking English as an additional language, to get the most out of lessons.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership, firmly focused on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. High expectations are shared by governors who understand the school's strengths and development areas well. They effectively hold leaders to account. As a result, the school is improving at a good rate.
- Due to the concerted effort of pupils, parents and staff, attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of teaching requires improvement.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have enough time to complete tasks because teachers talk for too long or do not expect enough from pupils when they work independently.
- Marking does not always show how pupils' work can be improved and not enough time is given for pupils to act on teachers' advice.
- Chances to allow pupils to practise their basic skills in other areas of the curriculum are sometimes missed.
- Strategic plans for improving the school do not have sharp enough targets to enable leaders, including governors, to measure precisely the success of actions taken.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were joint observations with senior leaders. The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work in all classes. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body. They spoke to a representative of the local authority and met with members of the school staff.
- In the course of the inspection, inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the school's own questionnaires to parents. There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a summary of parents' views. Inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the questionnaire completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including a summary of the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, development plan and analysis of current data of pupils' attainment and progress. Minutes from governing body meetings and external reports from the local authority were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Chris Maloney

Additional Inspector

John Evans

Additional Inspector

Peter Martin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average sized primary school. The very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage, and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is decreasing and is now broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is high compared to the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children that are looked after, those from armed services families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than the normal time in the school year is rising and is now above average.
- A daily breakfast club is provided which is managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has experienced instability in staffing since the previous inspection. This includes a number of staff taking maternity leave and changes to the senior leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and more is outstanding to raise pupils' achievement even further by making sure that:
 - all teachers keep introductions to lessons sharp and expect more from when pupils work independently so that learning can move at brisk pace and they are able to complete more work in the time available
 - all teachers provide regular and helpful guidance in marking so that pupils know how to improve their work and are given time in lessons to act on teachers advice, providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that the school development plan and subject leaders' action plans identify precisely how leaders intend to measure the success of the actions taken to improve pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter the Nursery and Reception classes at a very early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Children settle well because of the excellent care they receive and the strong partnerships established with parents. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage excites and captures children's interests extremely well and, together with the strong emphasis placed on developing language, enables children to achieve well. Most are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The above average proportion of pupils that join the school at other than the usual times, often at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language and with below average levels of attainment, can impact significantly on the levels of attainment reported in national tests. Between Years 1 and 6, overall, pupils make good progress and standards overall in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average.
- New arrivals are welcomed and helped to settle quickly into the school community and, given their often lower starting points, they achieve well.
- In 2012, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 improved significantly. In reading, for example, an above average proportion of pupils reached the higher levels of attainment. Improvements in the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is now helping pupils in Key Stage 1 to make good progress in reading. Other changes to the way that reading is taught across the school have successfully increased pupils' enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 also improved significantly in 2012. Their broadly average levels of attainment reflected good progress in English and mathematics from their previous starting points. An above average proportion of pupils made the progress that is expected nationally through Key Stage 2. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils making more than the expected levels of progress was also higher than that expected nationally.
- Although between Years 1 and 6 progress is good, it is not always even in all classes. This is because a few variations in the quality of teaching in some classes remain. Achievement is also sometimes held back because pupils are not always provided with enough opportunities to practise their basic skills, such as in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT when they complete work in other subjects.
- The very large majority of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress from their starting points. They are given regular opportunities in lessons to hear and practise their speaking skills.
- Procedures to identify pupils who require support at school action are now more rigorous and identification of the needs of these pupils is more precise. School data and inspection evidence shows that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points and some do better than this. This is because of the effective support they receive in class, in small groups and in one-to-one sessions with adults.
- The pupil premium funding, is used to good effect and has helped to raise standards for those pupils known to be eligible for it. In Year 6 in 2012 for example, in English and mathematics, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was about one term ahead of similar pupils nationally. Furthermore, the gap in the attainment between eligible pupils and others in the school was smaller than the gap nationally. This shows that the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination successfully.

The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching the majority is good and some is outstanding. A small minority requires improvement.

- Effective teamwork exists between teachers and teaching assistants. Adults use a variety of methods to engage pupils' interests well, regularly asking skilful questions to carefully check pupils' understanding.
- Teachers carefully plan activities that are well matched to pupils' varying learning needs and that enthuse and motivate pupils to do their best. However, too few opportunities exist for pupils to practise their reading, writing, mathematics and ICT skills in different areas of the curriculum.
- Where teaching is strongest and learning is most rapid, lessons move at a particularly good pace. For example, in a girls' Year 6 mathematics set, pupils were engaged in a brisk-paced lesson enthusiastically applying their skills to organise fractions, decimals and percentages into groups. The girls worked quickly and effectively in pairs, discussing their work and sharing their thoughts in order to arrive at joint decisions.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to work in different groups in order to effectively develop pupils' language skills. This is particularly helpful for pupils that speak English as an additional language, and especially those who join the school at other than the usual time and who are new to English. Pupils are also well supported by teaching assistants, some of whom explain things in both pupils' home language and English.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers sometimes talk too much and this leaves too little time for pupils to complete planned tasks. Similarly, expectations of what pupils can achieve when they work on their own are not always high enough to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers' marking is generally regular, although occasionally pupils' work remains unmarked. Praise for pupils' efforts is usually shown; however, not enough guidance is given to help pupils understand how to improve their work. Pupils do not have enough opportunities in lessons to respond when teachers have provided advice on the 'next steps' for them to follow.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Birchfields is a cohesive and inclusive school with a strong sense of community. A key feature of its success is the way in which pupils from different backgrounds work and play happily together. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that the school is very welcoming. They have a high regard for the way the school cares for their children. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and feel very safe.
- Staff regularly praise and encourage pupils so that their behaviour in lessons and around school is never less than good and is often exemplary. School rules are clearly understood by all and pupils say that the adults apply these consistently. The different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and hurtful name calling, are fully understood by pupils. They say incidents are extremely rare and are dealt with very promptly and effectively if they do occur.
- A key feature of lessons is the way that pupils engage in their learning; they are really eager to learn and answer questions enthusiastically. Pupils work very well together to discuss ideas and support one another, particularly when new pupils join the school. This makes a strong contribution to their own and others learning, especially those new to speaking English as an additional language.
- The school places a high priority on good attendance. As a result of rigorous and robust actions taken by leaders, attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now broadly average overall and better than average for the main minority ethnic groups represented.
- Pupils take a keen interest in the life of the school and undertake a number of different roles. The 'friendship advisers' help other pupils on the playground and the school council committee structure is well organised and enables pupils to contribute to decision making in the school.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club are well cared for. Behaviour is excellent and relationships with staff are highly positive. The focus on reading at this time helps get the day off to a good start and maintains the same high focus on this aspect of the curriculum as in the rest of the school day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff, is committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve. Her vision is shared by the governors and staff, who are enthusiastic and determined to do the very best for all pupils. Their successes are evident in the recent improvements seen, for example, in the higher standards now reached both by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and in pupils' improved attendance.
- Senior leaders' checks on how well the school is doing are generally accurate. They make good use of information about the achievement of pupils and groups of pupils to ensure that all achieve equally well. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The quality of teaching is checked regularly and there are clear links between pupils' achievement and any increases to teachers' salaries. This ensures that staff are held to account for pupils' progress.
- Staff work effectively in teams to identify what actions need to be taken to improve teaching and to ensure that training is provided to address key areas for improvement. Unavoidable changes to staffing, which sometimes occur during the school year, are managed well by the headteacher. Good procedures are in place to help new and temporary members of staff settle quickly and understand what is needed to teach well in Birchfields. However, leaders are yet to ensure that all teaching is always good.
- The correct priorities for improvement are identified in the school development plan and subject leaders' action plans. However, targets to measure the progress of actions and the impact on pupils' achievements are not always precise enough to ensure that leaders, including governors, have the information they need to check if actions taken have been successful.
- A wide range of rich and memorable visits, visitors and experiences extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom. For example, during the inspection, Nursery children, helped by many of their parents, made a visit to the museum as part of their studies. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Opportunities to learn Mandarin and have brass and string instrument lessons further enrich pupils' social and cultural development.
- The school receives appropriate 'light- touch' support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides very good support for school leaders. Governors are skilled, experienced and fully committed to the school and the local area. Through regular information provided by the headteacher and staff, governors know which areas need to be improved and check whether these are being addressed. They ask challenging questions and have good systems in place to find out, first-hand, about school life. They keep a check on how well the quality of teaching is improving and on how this relates to the salary increases of staff. Governors are accessible to parents and take a very proactive approach to their role. Parent governors hold regular coffee mornings for parents. Governors undertake training and fulfil their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The governing body monitors the school's spending regularly, including whether the pupil premium is being used well to make a difference to the pupils known to be eligible for this funding.

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	130380
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	411968

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	716
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Rabnawaz Akbar
Headteacher	Miss Samantha Offord
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
Telephone number	0161 224 3892
Fax number	0161 224 3548
Email address	admin@birchfields.manchester.sch.uk

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