

# Phoenix Primary School

Birchfield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L7 9LY

**Inspection dates** 29–30 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- During their time in the school, all groups of pupils do not consistently achieve better than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not sufficiently stimulating to enable children to fully develop skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not consistently use information, about how well pupils learn, to plan lessons which challenge them and, particularly the most able, to make at least good progress.
- Marking of pupils' work does not consistently show them how to improve and teachers do not provide them with enough time to act upon the advice given.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills in all the subjects of the curriculum.
- The skills of the middle leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are not fully developed.
- Governors have not sufficiently challenged leaders by holding them to account for those groups of pupils who make less than good progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is very welcoming and especially to those pupils who join during the school year.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress from their individual starting points.
- There is some good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching. This has led to pupils' attainment improving well in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe in school.
- The curriculum provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Resolute and very effective leadership from the headteacher.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, representatives from the local authority and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors examined the school's documentation relating to pupils' progress, the school's view of its performance and policies relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke informally to pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- There were only nine parental responses received at the time of the inspection from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) which could not be viewed by the inspectors. However, the inspectors took account of the school's own parental survey.
- The inspector scrutinised the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

## Inspection team

Clare Henderson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Prydwen Elfed-Owens	Additional Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus is above average.
- The school offers specially resourced provision for up to 14 disabled pupils and those with complex special educational needs. These pupils are allocated a place within this provision by Children's Services and are taught alongside other pupils in the school for part of the day.
- The school runs a breakfast club which is attended by a high proportion of pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In the past, there has been staffing instability. There have been four acting headteachers since the last inspection. The current headteacher took up the post in September 2013.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is good and more is outstanding in order to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - teachers use the information about how well pupils have learned to consistently plan lessons which fully match pupils' needs so that activities challenge all pupils to achieve the best they possibly can
  - marking of pupils' work consistently shows them how to improve their work and that teachers provide pupils with enough time to act upon the advice given
  - pupils have more opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills in all the subjects of the curriculum.
- Ensure that provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides more opportunities for children to develop their skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance by:
  - providing more opportunities for middle leaders to develop their skills in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' learning
  - increasing the skills and experience of the governing body in order to robustly challenge the school on the progress of groups of pupils and of the impact of the Primary School Sport funding spending on pupils' physical well-being.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress, from their individual starting points, is not consistently good throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teachers do not always use the information about how well pupils learn to plan lessons which challenge them and, particularly the most able, to achieve the best they can. Because of this, the school is not fully promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Most children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make steady progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage when the adults lead the learning. However, when they play on their own, progress slows because the provision available is insufficiently stimulating to enable the children to fully develop their skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- Over the last three years, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 has been well below the national average overall. However, in 2013, attainment rose significantly and was broadly average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. This is because a greater focus was given to providing pupils with more opportunities to read widely, to practise their letters and sounds and basic mathematical skills more systematically.
- Pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2012 and 2013, although improved on 2011, were still well below average in reading, writing and mathematics overall. This data needs to be treated with caution because it does not fully take into account the severe and complex learning disabilities of a significant proportion of the pupils in the school.
- Although pupils at Key Stage 1 made better progress than previously in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013, groups of learners throughout the school make variable progress. A contributory factor is that the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Furthermore, the marking of pupils' work does not always show them how to improve and teachers do not provide pupils with enough time to act upon the advice given.
- In writing, pupils in different year groups and particularly the most able, make inconsistent progress because there are not enough opportunities for them to develop and extend their writing skills in all the subjects of the curriculum.
- Because work is not always fully matched to their individual interests and needs, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Likewise, pupils in the specially resourced provision do not always make good progress from their individual starting points
- Those pupils who arrive during the school year, with their individual learning needs make the similar progress as their classmates.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, made better progress than other pupils in the school and pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics in 2012. These good levels of progress continue to be a feature of learning for most pupils in this group currently in the school. This is because their individual needs are identified and support is given to help them in class and in small groups.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because teaching is not consistently good; some lessons lack sufficient challenge and pace. On occasions, there are missed opportunities to allow pupils time to work independently and research new information.
- Learning support assistants provide good levels of care so that disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs in the school and in the specially resourced provision engage well in learning although work is not always fully matched to their interests or learning needs.

- Although there is some teaching which is good and occasionally outstanding, it is not consistently good over time or in all classes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are well cared for and, in the lessons that adults lead, children learn to follow instructions and they happily get along with one another. However, children do not make consistently good progress in all areas of learning because they do not have enough opportunities to develop their investigation and problem-solving skills.
- The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is improving because teachers and support staff ask challenging questions which secure pupils' understanding and extend their learning well. In an outstanding Year 1 lesson, for instance, the work was well matched to pupils' abilities and the activities were engaging. Consequently, all pupils made rapid progress in extending their computer skills as they worked confidently and independently during an information and communication technology lesson.
- In some Key Stage 2 classes, such as in an outstanding Year 3 English lesson, pupils made rapid progress because the work on myths and legends was challenging and well-matched to the pupils' interests and abilities. However, this rapid rate of progress is not consistent in all year groups. In some lessons, there is time wasted because teachers use activities to find out what pupils know, rather than use information from previous assessments of their learning to plan lessons which fully challenge all pupils and, particularly the most able to achieve their best.
- The teaching for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, who are currently in the school, is well managed with appropriate resources available. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Behaviour observed in lessons by inspectors was good and sometimes outstanding. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Inspectors' observations and school records show that behaviour is typically good in classes, around the school and over time. Pupils say that poor behaviour never spoils lessons.
- Pupils enjoy school. The views of one pupil who said, 'coming to school is good and every day you learn something new and everyone is improving' reflected the views of many of the pupils with whom the inspectors spoke.
- Pupils enjoy a range of responsibilities in their classrooms and around the school, such as members of the school council or being in the group who canvassed and acted upon the views of classmates when drawing together their behaviour booklet. Such roles teach them to act responsibly and support each other.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are safe and secure and settle quickly because of the good levels of care provided by all the adults.
- Behaviour is judged as good rather than outstanding. Occasionally, instances of silly behaviour arise in lessons when pupils are not fully involved in learning because the tasks set do not fully challenge them.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about safety and show consideration for each other when, for instance, they play sensibly on the playground. They say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe and understand how to keep safe. Pupils say teachers and support staff have helped them to understand how to take care on the roads or when using the internet.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare in school and is always sorted out quickly by the teachers.
- A daily breakfast club, attended by a high proportion of pupils, makes a good contribution to pupils' personal well-being.
- Attendance is rapidly improving and is currently closer to the national average than it has been since the last inspection. This is because staff are vigilant in dealing with absence and have a wide raft of rewards on offer for those whose attendance is above average.

**The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has undertaken a very comprehensive review of the school's effectiveness and in a very short time has drawn the staff together as a team committed to improvement.
- Clear actions for improving the quality of teaching to make sure that pupils' achievement becomes consistently good across the school are the first priority of the school improvement plan. The local authority has provided significant levels of support in this work.
- Targets set for teachers now concentrate on raising pupils' achievement, and are linked to training and to teachers' salary progression.
- Leadership is not good because the skills of middle leaders in checking that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are good enough are not fully developed. Furthermore, governors are not holding the school to account sufficiently rigorously because in the past they have not been provided with enough opportunities to do this work.
- Nevertheless, high quality staff appointments, including that of the headteacher, improvements to the quality of teaching, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 and the good progress made by pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, demonstrate the school can improve further.
- The curriculum covers all the necessary subjects effectively. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well because good opportunities for pupils to extend their artistic, musical and sporting skills are built into learning within the curriculum. It is particularly strong in the provision and leadership of physical education. However, it does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills in all the subjects they study.
- The new Primary School Sport funding has increased pupils' participation in physical education and sport and is contributing well to developing better physical well-being for pupils. However, the impact of this spending has not been fully evaluated by the governing body.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and child protection procedures meet statutory requirements.
- Parents say they are well informed about the work of the school because of the regular letters the school send home.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance requires improvement because governors do not provide a sufficient level of challenge to school leaders. They receive pupils' progress information but do not effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account for the rate of pupils' progress. They have relied on information from leaders and the local authority, without fully challenging leaders.
  - Governors are now more actively involved in checking staff's performance and setting clear targets for improvement. However, governors who are relatively new to their role do not have the knowledge and skills to fully undertake this. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and members of the governing body carry out regular checks to make sure that pupils are kept safe. Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding. However, they have yet to measure the impact of this on eligible pupils' achievement. They also keep a close eye on the school budget.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133702
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	426308

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Leigh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 228 3831
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