

Four Oaks Primary School

39 Davy Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L5 1XP

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Teachers do not always use accurate assessments to match work to pupils' abilities.
- The school's own tracking data shows that there have been some improvements in the progress of reading this year. However, over a number of years, leaders have been too slow to address successive poor reading outcomes for pupils leaving key stage 2.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make better-than-expected progress. Consequently, few attain the higher standards in reading, writing or mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders are too slow to take action when teaching is not effective. This slows down pupils' progress.
- Children in the early years do not have enough opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Children do not make the progress that they are capable of, and too few achieve a good level of development.
- Governors do not evaluate effectively the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' progress.
- Over time, governors have failed to understand the significance of the school's declining performance. They have therefore not held school leaders to account well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors are passionate for pupils to do well. They ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Work done to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of activities to broaden their experiences.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly.
- School attendance figures are improving and the rates of persistent absences are decreasing.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, by ensuring that:
 - senior and middle leaders raise their expectations to make sure that the quality of teaching and of pupils' work is consistently good across the school
 - assessments are accurate and are used to challenge and support all pupils to make good progress
 - senior leaders and governors regularly check the impact of pupil premium spending on disadvantaged pupils' progress
 - governors more effectively hold school leaders to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
 - ensuring that agreed strategies for reading are implemented consistently
 - providing opportunities to extend and challenge the most able pupils
 - making full use of the indoor and outdoor areas to support children's development in reading, writing and mathematics in the early years.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards achieved by pupils at the end of key stage 2 have declined. The progress of pupils in reading has fallen sharply. Actions taken by leaders to address this issue have been slow. Leaders' efforts to improve progress in mathematics have had some success, although mathematics progress has been typically below average over time. Leaders have, however, been more successful in raising standards in writing.
- Until recently, school leaders have not taken effective action to address inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment across the school. School development planning and self-evaluation show that they have accurately identified the teaching of reading as a key priority. Leaders and governors have been overly optimistic in their view of the school's effectiveness and have failed to recognise endemic problems beyond issues such as staffing and the contextual needs of the pupils.
- Leaders have not put plans in place quickly enough to address the decline. In response to the continued decline in standards, the headteacher now oversees the performance management of all teachers, ensuring that there is consistency in how they are held to account for pupils' performance. The school currently receives support from Liverpool local authority. An education consultant works alongside the headteacher for two days each week to add capacity to the senior leadership of the school.
- Monitoring systems are closely linked to the school development plan. Priority areas that are identified are linked to the performance management of teachers. Professional development opportunities are identified as a result of these priorities. There is an expectation that all professional development is cascaded down to all through staff meetings. Recent staff training has focused specifically on the teaching of reading. The school's own monitoring of reading shows that the school's preferred style for the teaching of reading is yet to be fully embedded by all teachers and teaching assistants across all year groups.
- The roles of middle leaders in the school are developing. Middle leaders have a growing understanding of how pupils are assessed across the curriculum. However, they agree that in some subjects, for example history and geography, too much emphasis has been placed on writing rather than subject-specific skills of research and enquiry.
- Parents and carers who were spoken to during the inspection, typically, were positive about the school. Parents were generally complimentary about the provision. A view representative of those who responded is, 'Our children never fail to come out of school with a smile on their faces, and this is a credit to the staff who make being at Four Oaks a safe, fun and caring environment.'
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support and make typically good progress from their starting points. The school provides a wide range of support to pupils who have social and emotional difficulties.
- Leaders ensure that the life experiences of pupils are broad and varied. For example, all pupils in Year 2 experience horse riding, and the pupils in key stage 2 have the

opportunity to go on a residential visit each year. Pupils benefit from a wide curriculum that is rich with opportunities to develop their artistic, sporting and enquiry skills. These enrichment opportunities are funded using pupil premium and sports premium money. However, this funding is not being used effectively to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils go on to make expected, or better than expected, progress in English and mathematics.

- The curriculum contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding of community; they respect differences and take pride in their city. Pupils spoken to during the inspection know and understand about different types of families. One pupil commented, 'It's good to be different.' This reflects the way pupils are taught to celebrate diversity.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body have an unrealistic view of the school's effectiveness. Governors do not hold senior leaders to account for the decline in standards and overall performance. They have been too slow to put plans in place to support the headteacher. Governors are aware of how the pupil premium funding has been spent. However, they have not asked important questions about why this spending is not having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' achievement.
- Governors receive performance information from the headteacher termly. Newer members of the governing board lack the skills necessary to ask challenging questions. Governors are supportive of the headteacher and are eager to turn the school around.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Four Oaks. The school provides a safe and caring environment for its pupils. School leaders recognise the challenges faced by individuals and put measures in place to ensure that pupils stay safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff have received up-to-date safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Members of staff spoken to were aware of the safeguarding procedures employed in the school. Records are well maintained. Governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.
- All statutory checks are in place to ensure the suitability of adults working in school. The site is secure and all visitors are made aware of the safeguarding policy on arrival. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe. This view was shared by parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to the online survey.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Reading is not taught consistently well across the school. Inspection evidence, including the school's most recent tracking and monitoring information, and visits to classes, confirm that the teaching of reading varies in quality between classes and key stages. Where it is less effective, there are often gaps in the skills of the staff. The

headteacher recognises that further training is required to bring all staff to the same standard when teaching reading, moving away from a culture of simply hearing pupils read.

- Historic weak assessment practices have been a contributing factor to declining results. Inaccurate mid-year assessments have given the school false hope and an unrealistic understanding of actual performance. The school is now addressing this by using a variety of assessment methods to ensure that a more accurate picture of current performance is captured. The headteacher acknowledges that the school is now filling gaps through high levels of additional adult support.
- Teaching of mathematics is variable. Teachers do not use assessment to accurately pitch work to the ability of the pupils, and so pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, inspectors found evidence of pupils finding halves of shapes in Nursery, Year 2 and Year 6. The most able pupils are not stretched, and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through investigative and problem-solving work.
- A lack of challenge for the most able pupils was not just to be found in mathematics books. Looking in pupils' English books, inspectors found work to be of varied quality. Pupils often do not write using accurate punctuation. Where teachers fail to pick up on these mistakes, pupils continue to make the same errors. Handwriting is not consistent and presentation is sometimes poor; this is partly due to the varied expectations of different teachers.
- Work in topic books shows a wide coverage of curriculum content. However, there is limited evidence of subject-specific skills. For example, in history and geography, enquiry and questioning skills are limited and there is a heavy focus on written work. Leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils have the opportunities to develop subject-specific skills.
- Typically, pupils spend too much time preparing to begin work. Teachers fail to match the length and complexity of their input to the ability of the majority of pupils. Pupils sometimes find it difficult to remain focused and take on board information. As a result, pupils' attention sometimes wanders and learning slows. For example, in one lesson, the pupils spoken to said that they just wanted to write but due to the overload of information they felt overwhelmed.
- In contrast to this, some teachers employ a wide range of questioning strategies, ensuring that pupils stay motivated and engaged. For example, during small-group tuition in Year 6, pupils get to work quickly and engage with the class teacher to complete challenging calculations in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are friendly, welcoming and are proud to talk about their work. Pupils are self-confident and talk about their school experiences with excitement.
- Pupils benefit from rich curriculum experiences, which include water sports, horse

riding, raft building, swimming, Mandarin Chinese lessons and individual music tuition.

- Older pupils, however, spoke about a lack of opportunities open to them to take on additional responsibilities. They spoke about the role of the school council but were keen for the school to give them extra responsibilities. Older pupils really enjoy helping to look after the younger children in the hall during lunchtimes.
- Pupils said that they feel safe and they know whom to speak to if they are upset. They said that bullying and name calling are rare but that sometimes pupils fall out while playing football. Pupils said that behaviour in lessons is good and that there are few interruptions to their learning.
- Pupils spoke about the lessons that they have had to help keep them safe. They spoke about road safety and about how they keep safe online. Pupils have a clear understanding about e-safety and they know that certain websites are blocked in school for their safety.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is typically good. Only when teaching is less engaging and effective does pupils' concentration wane and they become distracted. Even then, this does not lead to behaviour that causes disruption.
- The conduct of pupils during the school day is typically good; this is confirmed by the school's behaviour logs. Pupils move between classes, through corridors and up and down stairs, with little staff intervention. On the playground, pupils play games together and get along well. Pupils spoke about the privileges that they earn for good behaviour.
- Attendance of pupils has improved. With the exception of a dip towards the end of 2017, the picture is improving and is now broadly in line with the national average. Previous high rates of persistent absence have dropped significantly but remain a focus for further improvement.
- The school environment is clean and tidy. Pupils benefit from a recently built school with state-of-the-art facilities. The staff and pupils make good use of the learning environment. The work of the pupils is celebrated well throughout the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because there are significant gaps in pupils' learning. These gaps have not been identified early enough, and too much time is spent filling gaps when the pupils reach Year 6.
- Successive years have seen a marked decline in the progress that pupils make, especially in reading at the end of key stage 2. However, inspectors noted that the school is now addressing this issue and has refocused the way in which reading is taught. It is too early to judge the long-term effectiveness of this approach due to inconsistencies in teaching. The school's own tracking data for this year shows that a majority of pupils are making steady progress from their starting points in reading, but not enough pupils are working at or beyond age-related expectations.

- Results from the Year 1 phonics screening check show that pupils achieve above the national average. This promising start is not built on in the rest of key stage 1. By the time pupils leave Year 2, outcomes have remained below the national average for several years. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics continues to be low in comparison to the national average.
- Standards in writing at the end of key stage 2 have remained above the national average for the last two years. The assessment of writing is moderated by the local authority each year. Standards of writing in English books are typically similar to those found in books from other subjects. The school's tracking data shows that the progress of writing is improving this year across most year groups with increased numbers making expected progress from their starting points.
- Published data shows that the attainment of pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has increased since 2016. Pupils' attainment in 2017 was in line with the national average, and a small minority make better-than-expected progress. However, in mathematics books, little evidence could be found to show that the most able pupils work without high levels of adult support. Pupils, therefore, do not develop the skills of independent working. The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged across the board to make the best possible progress and reach high standards.
- By the end of key stage 2, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is similar to that of other pupils. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made better progress in mathematics than non-disadvantaged pupils. However, numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding vary significantly year on year, making it difficult to rely on published data alone. The school's pupil progress data shows that, despite high levels of additional funding, too few disadvantaged pupils are making good enough progress to attain the higher standards in reading, writing or mathematics.
- High levels of staffing are in place, and pupils who have additional needs benefit from individual and small-group tuition. Leaders and governors are not able to say which of these interventions has the most impact on pupils' progress. According to school tracking data, the vast majority of these pupils make steady progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Recent staff development in relation to specific SEN issues has meant that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Aspects of leadership and management of the early years provision, including leadership of the quality of teaching, are not consistently good. Assessment information is not used consistently to identify relevant priorities to address low outcomes for children.
- Parents are well informed about activities in the early years and are encouraged to be involved in their children's education. The school runs 'stay and play' sessions and phonics workshops and has an open-door policy where parents can speak to members of the early years staff.
- Baseline assessment information indicates that children enter the early years with weak language and communication skills. Where children make progress, it is typical

progress. Not enough is done to ensure that children make accelerated progress and catch up with similar children nationally.

- Inspectors found that there was a notable lack of consistency between the different phases of the early years. Inspectors observed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Expectations for children are varied. For example, children in the Nursery class were observed counting to 20, whereas there were missed opportunities to develop children's mathematics skills in the Reception class.
- In the Nursery class, the spoken language skills of significant numbers of children are low. However, inspectors did observe that children typically listen to adults' instructions with care. Children in the Reception class sometimes lack direction and move repeatedly between tasks even while under the supervision of adults.
- Teachers' observations, do not link clearly to the early years outcomes. Teachers do not consistently use accurate assessment to inform planning of provision.
- Children do not always stay focused on tasks. Opportunities to extend language and communication skills are not always acted on, and learning experiences are limited. Adult interventions are not always appropriate; they do not maximise possible learning experiences.
- The outdoor environment is well resourced and inviting. The children have a lot of space to explore and equipment to engage with, including a tree house and slide. However, teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop and practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills out of doors.
- Children cooperate well together. They behave well and share resources. The children in the early years are well cared for. All welfare requirements are met and safeguarding is effective.
- Published data and the school's own tracking and monitoring continue to show that outcomes in reading, writing and number remain low. Too few children who enter early years working at a level below that typical for their age catch up quickly enough to achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception.

School details

Unique reference number	131313
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10043214

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nikki Smith
Headteacher	Sara Robinson
Telephone number	01512 634038
Website	www.fouroaksprimary.co.uk
Email address	fouroaks-ao@fouroaks.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15– 16 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school runs a resourced provision on behalf of the local authority. There are four units, each catering for up to eight children who have speech and language needs. Pupils who attend the provision remain on the roll of their feeder school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the support through the pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning and assessment over time.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books and observed teaching in lessons including undertaking joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors took into account the 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account 10 free text messages and three letters that were brought to their attention.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally throughout the inspection, in lessons, in the dining hall and on the playground.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.
- Inspectors examined documents relating to standards, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met the chair and five other members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

John Donald, lead inspector

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Gary Kelly

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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