

# Inspection of Birkenhead Christ Church CofE Primary School

Mount Grove, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 2UJ

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Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November and 7 December 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils, including children in the early years, take pride in belonging to this nurturing and caring school. New arrivals, many of whom are new to the country, are welcomed warmly. They settle quickly and become valued members of the school community.

Pupils are cared for well. They benefit from the wide range of support that they receive for their emotional well-being. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities to work alongside Ted, the school dog. This support helps pupils to deal with challenging periods in their lives. It also helps some pupils to manage their own behaviour. This ensures that the school is calm and pupils are ready to learn.

Pupils learn to respect and celebrate the differences between themselves and others. They understand that everyone is unique and special. Pupils are considerate of others. For example, they make sure that everyone has someone to play with at social times.

Leaders at all levels have high expectations for pupils' academic success. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and reshaped to make sure that pupils gain the knowledge that they need for future learning. Most pupils, especially younger pupils, achieve well across a broad range of subjects.

Pupils are keen to contribute to the smooth running of the school. Many take on leadership roles, such as being an attendance ambassador. They show care for others who are less fortunate than themselves by raising money for a range of charities.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

By the end of Year 6, some pupils do not achieve as well as others nationally. However, this belies the true picture of pupils' education at this school. For example, in 2023, over half of the Year 6 pupils joined the school at different points during key stage 2, with almost a third starting in Years 5 and 6. In addition, the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that many pupils had gaps in their learning. They did not have enough time to make up for lost learning.

Current pupils are achieving well overall. This is because they learn from an ambitious and rich curriculum that enables them to gain a secure body of knowledge across different subjects. Teachers have been trained well so that they deliver the curriculum effectively. They typically check pupils' learning carefully and help those who struggle with new concepts to keep up. Even so, some older pupils find it harder to remember their earlier learning. This hinders them from applying what they have been taught to new learning. These pupils have had less time to benefit from the refreshed curriculums that have been put in place in recent years.

Making sure that pupils master the fundamental skills of reading and writing is everyone's business. This is reflected in pupils' written work. However, the school's work to develop pupils' oral communication is at an earlier stage of development. Although pupils are immersed in subject-specific vocabulary, they do not readily use these words to talk about their learning. This hampers pupils' ability to articulate their ideas, share their views and link their learning to what they know.

Pupils develop a love of reading. This begins in the early years, where children enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes and listening to new and familiar stories. The revised approach to the teaching of phonics is proving to be successful. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has increased considerably. Pupils become fluent readers over time.

The school has very secure systems to identify pupils who find learning difficult. This applies to pupils who have gaps in their learning and to those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Across all year groups, including in the early years, teachers use the clear guidance that they receive to adapt learning carefully. This ensures that pupils with SEND keep pace with the expectations within the curriculum.

Children in the early years follow routines well. They learn to share and to listen to others. Pupils across other year groups also behave well. They follow the expectations for their conduct. For example, despite the excitement of wearing Christmas jumpers and eating Christmas lunch during this inspection, their behaviour did not falter. As a result, they spent an enjoyable time sharing a meal with their friends among the festive decorations in the dining hall.

Improving pupils' attendance is a high priority. The school has identified the reasons why some pupils do not attend school. It has also developed a range of strategies to prevent absence. Even so, some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. They miss out on the rich experiences on offer and their learning suffers as a result.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities that enhance their personal development. They enjoy meeting a range of visitors, such as local artists, and taking part in trips. For example, it is a tradition for Year 6 pupils to participate in many lovely activities, such as a visit to the cinema, before they move on to their secondary school. Pupils gain an insight into fundamental British values and they take a keen interest in learning about pupils who have different beliefs to their own. They learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Staff appreciate the support that they receive to help them to develop their roles. The school balances changes to the curriculum carefully against the demands on staff's time and workload.

Governors understand their roles well and they fulfil their duties effectively. They hold the school to account for the quality of education that pupils receive.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some older pupils, who have not benefited from the revised approach to the curriculum, find it difficult to remember some of their earlier learning. This makes it difficult for them to build on what they know. The school should ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to recall what has been taught so that they leave Year 6 with the knowledge they need for the next steps in their learning.
- Some pupils' spoken language is a barrier to them sharing their ideas clearly. This means that these pupils are not able to articulate their views, which limits their ability to make links to their earlier learning. The school should ensure that pupils have the knowledge that they need to communicate their ideas and thinking clearly.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Consequently, these pupils miss out on important learning. The school should continue to work with families to improve pupils' rates of attendance.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105064
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241937
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	181
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Linda Christian
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Twedde
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.christchurchbirkenhead.com">www.christchurchbirkenhead.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school runs before-school provision on the school's site.
- The headteacher took up post in March 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school and is part of the Diocese of Chester. The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place in 2024.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. An additional visit was made to the school on 7 December 2023 to gather additional evidence.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also held discussions about the curriculum in a number of other subjects and reviewed pupils' work. Inspectors heard some pupils read to a trusted adult.
- Inspectors spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, pupils, parents and carers, governors, the school improvement partner, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan. They also visited the before-school provision.

### **Inspection team**

Jane Dennis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sandra Hamilton	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Olsson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Frith Murphy	His Majesty's Inspector

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