



Inspection report

# The Beacon CE Primary School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 131311  
LEA Liverpool

Inspection number 274730  
Inspection dates 3 and 4 May 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr J Gornall HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Heyworth Street
School category	Voluntary Controlled <i>Diocese of Liverpool</i>		Liverpool Merseyside L5 3QG
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01512634206
Number on roll	170	Fax number	01512631583
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Acting Chair of governors	Mrs C Carmichael
Date of previous inspection	March 2004	Acting Headteacher	Ms J Olsson

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 to 11 years	10 June 2005	274730

## Introduction

When The Beacon CE Primary School was inspected in March 2004, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on two occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in May 2005.

### Description of the school

The Beacon CE Primary School is situated in the Everton district of inner-city Liverpool. It serves a challenging community with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The school is slightly smaller than average; there are 170 pupils on roll including those in the nursery. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased slightly; it is now nine per cent of the overall school population and there are 15 pupils for whom English is an additional language. Sixty five per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average. About a quarter of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs; this is slightly above average. The headteacher, who was appointed shortly after the school was identified as requiring special measures, is currently on maternity leave. A school improvement officer from the local education authority (LEA) has been seconded to the school as acting headteacher.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

The Beacon CE Primary School is providing a sound education for its pupils. This is the result of the headteacher's and acting headteacher's incisive and purposeful leadership, the hard work of the teachers and a carefully focused programme of training and staff development. As a consequence of teaching which is at least satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally very good, and learning which is at least satisfactory, standards have risen and are now broadly in line with the nationally expected levels in most subjects. The proportion of consistently good or better teaching, although improved, is below that found in most primary schools. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall; over the last year they have learned good work habits. The pupils are well cared for and the school's ethos is very good. Attendance has risen and is now satisfactory. There are sound procedures for assessing the pupils' progress across the school, but the impact of these at classroom level is inconsistent and underdeveloped. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from visits and a good range of additional clubs.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of March 2004 required the school to address key issues concerned with: increasing the effectiveness of leadership and management and the involvement of the governing body; raising attainment in English, mathematics and science; improving teaching including the use of assessment; and improving attendance. There has been good progress over leadership and management, the quality of teaching and attendance. Reasonable progress has been made in raising standards and in the use of assessment.

### Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good. The acting headteacher has built upon the initial work of the headteacher by focusing unwaveringly on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards; the leadership of the school has been well supported in this by the staff and governors. There is a thorough programme for monitoring the school's performance and indicators show an increasingly positive trend. This information is frequently and carefully analysed, informing decisions about the allocation of extra support and resources, and setting the priorities within the school's strategic plans. The capacity of subject co-ordinators to fulfil their responsibilities has developed considerably and they are making appropriate contributions to these plans. Improved systems for monitoring the school's progress, and appropriate training, have improved governance; the governors are well placed to hold the school to account. There are good transitional arrangements to support the return of the substantive headteacher. The LEA has reported its intention to continue its additional support for the school for the remainder of this year.

## What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- continue to raise standards;
- further improve the quality of learning and teaching so more of it is consistently good or better;
- further develop the use of assessment.

## Achievement and standards

The attainment of the pupils when they first start at the school is well below average, particularly in the acquisition of language skills. The pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, and approximately two thirds reach the standards expected for five-year-olds. Some of the pupils in the nursery and reception classes make particularly good progress in developing their language skills. In the nursery class, they talked about their drawings, describing characters and actions, engaged in appropriate conversations in role play and conversed confidently during activities. In the reception class, the pupils recognised letters of the alphabet and blended them together to make sounds. The most able read short words confidently and suggested alternative words with the same sound.

The number of pupils in each year group is smaller than in most primary schools and caution needs to be exercised when interpreting National Curriculum test results. At Key Stage 1, the school's results for 2004 show an improvement on the previous year's figures. In 2004 the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 2 was below the national figure in reading, but close to it in writing and science and above it in mathematics. A feature of the school's 2004 performance is that it is now doing significantly better when its results are compared to those of similar schools. In lessons, standards varied but overall were in line with the expectations for the pupils' ages. At Key Stage 2, the results in the 2004 national tests showed a marked improvement in English, mathematics and science compared to the previous year. The proportion of the pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 4 rose by 20 percentage points in English, 50 percentage points in mathematics and 12 percentage points in science. These are significant increases, placing the school just below the average for all schools nationally in English and science and just above in mathematics. The school performed better than similar schools in all subjects. In lessons, standards varied but overall were generally around those expected for the pupils' ages.

As a consequence of improved teaching the pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. The work in the pupils' books and the school's own tracking of progress indicate that the rate of learning across the school is accelerating. When teaching was good or better the pupils made correspondingly stronger progress because most of the pupils are keen to learn. Nevertheless, progress was

impaired at times by shortfalls in the pupils' prior learning, due to weaknesses in past provision.

The progress of the pupils who have special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language was at least satisfactory in most lessons. Learning support assistants made a valuable contribution either in lessons or as part of the school's intervention strategy and the pupils' progress was good. Individual education plans for those pupils who have special educational needs are good.

## Personal development

The school has a consistent approach to managing the pupils' behaviour, within a climate of mutual respect; as a result the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The pupils behave well in lessons, in assemblies and around the school. Movement around the school is very well ordered and the pupils treat their environment with care. They settle quickly to their work in lessons and, when opportunities arise, they collaborate well with others in pairs and groups. The pupils are responding well to improved teaching and, where tasks are interesting and provide challenge, they are very enthusiastic. There are no reported incidents of bullying. The few pupils with specific behavioural needs are supported well by a team of effective learning support assistants. The number of pupils excluded annually from school is very low; there have been none this term.

The rate of pupils' attendance is satisfactory; it has improved since the inspection in 2004 from 93 to 95 per cent, which is in line with national figures. The improvement is related to the school's effectiveness in significantly reducing the amount of unauthorised absence. Strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality have been reviewed and updated. Good attendance is celebrated in classes and in assemblies and patterns of attendance are systematically monitored and appropriate action is taken where necessary. There were a small number of pupils who arrived late for the start of the school day, but punctuality to lessons throughout the rest of the day was good; it is satisfactory overall.

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The pupils work and play well together. A strong Christian ethos permeates the school's work and this is reinforced through school assemblies and links with the local church. There are several displays with a Christian theme that reinforce the school's values. A range of opportunities is provided for pupils after school, such as dance and performing arts, a homework club and various sports clubs. Links with community organisations further enrich the school's curriculum. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall, but there is insufficient opportunity for the pupils to learn about cultures other than their own.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved; it is now at least satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally very good. At the inspection in 2004, 13 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory, only a small proportion was good and none was very good. In this

inspection, all the lessons were satisfactory or better, and just under half were good or very good. The school's sustained efforts to improve the quality of teaching have achieved a better consistency across year groups, which has begun to eliminate the uneven progress characteristic of previous years. Where teaching was satisfactory, there were more strengths than weaknesses. Lessons were well planned, prepared and organised, and the intended learning outcomes were shared with the pupils from the start. The teachers' questioning was effective and there was a good focus on developing speaking and listening skills. There was a sensible balance between teacher exposition and the time provided for the pupils to engage in tasks and activities. Methods were varied, and often involved practical activities, which helped the pupils to apply what they had learned and deepen their understanding; for example, through games and competitive work in groups during mathematics lessons. Occasionally, following a vibrant start to a lesson, the pace of learning was allowed to slow for some groups of pupils because the teachers' expectations of what they might achieve were too low.

In the best lessons, the teachers had a good knowledge of their subject, classroom management was strong and the pupils were encouraged to take an active part in learning. The teachers had high expectations; they exemplified and modelled the standards they wanted, and were vigilant about the pupils' work rate. By using well-focused questioning and requiring the pupils to demonstrate what they had learned, the teachers carefully ensured that everyone was fully involved. In group activities, work was particularly well matched to the pupils' prior attainment.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and based on national requirements. Timetabling changes have significantly improved how the curriculum is organised. The provision of appropriate homework is a regular feature throughout the school. The school's provision for special educational needs has been improved and conforms to the national code of practice. There are effective and well-designed strategies for intervention and support, enabling those pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress. The school pays due regard to the pupils' safety, health and well-being. There are appropriate procedures for child protection. Good use is made of the space for pupils to enjoy games and physical exercise and there is a broad range of extracurricular activities.

Assessment procedures have improved but remain an underdeveloped area of the school's work. Information from National Curriculum assessments, tests and teacher assessments has been collated and forms the basis of targets for improvement in English and mathematics. The pupils' progress, measured against these expectations, is starting to be monitored but the full potential of the system has yet to be realised. Data from assessments is being used appropriately in some areas to direct extra work towards raising attainment, for example in the teaching of mathematics to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. However, this approach to the use of assessment for learning is not consistent across the school. The transfer of appropriate assessment information between all classes has improved. However, the setting, sharing and evaluation of targets for improving the pupils' learning is not embedded in all classes. The school's ability to identify underperformance is hindered in some year groups by a lack of awareness by staff about the levels associated with the National Curriculum. Marking is completed regularly and conscientiously and is helping pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

Links with parents and the community are very good. Parents help in classes, and a landscaped garden adjoining the reception class has been developed with their support. The pupils are also encouraged to think how they might make a contribution to the local community through displays and visiting speakers.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the acting headteacher is very good; she has built effectively upon the work initially begun by the headteacher. With enthusiasm and commitment, both leaders have provided clarity of educational direction, alongside the systems required to achieve improvement and the training needed to implement these successfully. As a consequence, a reinvigorated staff has worked hard to introduce the necessary changes. The assistant headteacher, who joined the school on a secondment from a local school, has been appointed as the substantive deputy headteacher, strengthening the leadership and management of the school. The role of the subject co-ordinators has developed substantially; they are contributing appropriately to reviews of progress in their subjects and to plans for future improvements. Middle managers talked confidently about the developments that have taken place in their areas of responsibility, in sharp contrast with their response a year ago. The management structure promotes effective communication, both within and between year groups, and key stages; this has resulted in far greater consistency of provision than was the case at the previous inspection. The school's strategic planning is well founded on the priorities arising from its rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The planning process is highly responsive to the school's changing needs.

Governors are playing an appropriate part in the leadership of the school. As a consequence of regular visits and briefing sessions with a specific focus, they are well informed about the school. Strengthened membership, a revised committee structure and relevant training have enabled the governing body to develop its role as a critical friend to the school.

The LEA's support for the school has been very good. It has been highly responsive to the school's needs in providing a range of effective and well-timed support. This has included ensuring continuity in the school's leadership, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, evaluating the school's progress against its action plan, and assisting subject co-ordinators and other managers to develop the skills required to fulfil their roles. Specialist support from consultants, including developing aspects of literacy and numeracy, has been well received by staff.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

The Beacon CE Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2004. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2004 and in January 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2004.

In May 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Sixteen lessons or part lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, the assistant headteacher, key senior staff and the learning mentor, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.



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