



Birkdale Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104860
LEA Sefton
Inspection number 277237
Inspection dates 13 February 2006 to 14 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Colin Smith CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Matlock Road
School category	Community		Birkdale
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Southport, Merseyside PR8 4EL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01704 567516
Number on roll	354	Fax number	01704 551949
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs L Cheeseman
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr P Kelly

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large and popular primary school. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average. However, there are increasing signs of social disadvantage, and the area around the school is scheduled for regeneration. Children enter school with attainment that is broadly typical for their age but the incidence of children with social and language difficulties is on the increase. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. A very small number of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds, of which very few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained many awards over recent years. These include achievement, basic skills and healthy schools awards, the Artsmark and Activemark Gold awards and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a successful school with some outstanding features that provides good value for money. The very caring atmosphere and excellent links with external agencies ensure an exemplary level of care is provided and children's learning and personal development are significantly enriched.

Senior staff have an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. They are correct in judging standards of achievement, teaching and learning and leadership and management to be good. Similarly, their perceptions that the curriculum and the level of care, support and guidance provided are outstanding are fully justified. Children's personal development and well-being is good, although not quite as outstanding as the school assessed. This is partly because children's interest and concentration decreases when the introductory part of the lesson takes too long.

High quality provision in the nursery and Reception classes ensures that children get off to a very good start. Good achievement enables older children to reach high standards in mathematics, science, the arts and physical education. Standards in English are average. Achievement in reading is good. Senior staff have correctly identified writing as an area requiring improvement and have implemented some effective strategies to raise achievement. However, more needs to be done to help children to produce good quality written work. Currently, the role of leader in some subjects does not focus sufficiently on checking teaching and children's work to measure the effect of changes.

The headteacher's excellent leadership has been instrumental in significantly raising standards in Key Stage 2 since the previous inspection. Despite the many successes, there is no complacency. The school's capacity for further improvement is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing by ensuring that children have sufficient time in lessons to practise and improve their work to enable them to write fluently, accurately and at length.
- Increase the influence of subject leaders by ensuring that they observe lessons and examine children's written work to identify where improvement is needed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards of achievement are good overall. Children in the Nursery and Reception make a very good start and most of them achieve the learning goals expected by the end of the Reception year.

Children in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. They reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. This is confirmed in

the 2005 assessments; however, there are signs of increasing achievement in the present Year 2.

Children's progress through Key Stage 2 is good, particularly in Year 6. Setting and achieving challenging targets has resulted in improving trends and significantly higher than average standards being achieved in mathematics and science in 2005. Standards in English are average. Junior children make excellent progress in mathematics, very good progress in science and good progress in reading. However, the school has correctly identified and taken action to raise achievement in writing. Children's enthusiasm for writing has improved but there is still more to do to help them to write with fluency, accuracy and flair.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress in response to the high levels of support they receive. The needs of the able, gifted and talented children are also met successfully, which enables them to fulfil their potential, particularly in achieving high standards in art and design, physical education and music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being is good with many outstanding features. Highly rewarding opportunities for children to work together, make informed decisions, develop insights into the arts and sport and explore the richness of other cultures, have a significant impact on their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance.

Children behave well and in many lessons impeccably. Their eagerness to learn is particularly evident in the Foundation Stage as children explore the many stimulating activities provided. Most children give of their best. However, occasionally teachers take too long introducing the lesson and younger children, particularly, can become unsettled and lose concentration. This is why children's personal development is not excellent, as the school believes.

The excellent school council enables children to appreciate how society operates. They thrive on responsibilities, for example to devise rules and organise playground games. The many opportunities to perform local and regional events make a significant contribution to their personal development.

Children's awareness of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They have a good understanding of personal safety by following the school's golden rules. They make an excellent contribution to the community through a myriad of educational projects, which greatly stimulates their enjoyment in learning and prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and over a quarter is outstanding. The strengths of the teaching are rooted in good use of assessment. This enables teachers to plan their lessons meticulously, taking account of children's different learning needs. Lesson objectives are made very clear. Children know exactly what they are expected to achieve. Teachers explain and demonstrate new ideas very effectively, often using projection screens and stimulating displays. This makes learning very visual and easier for children to understand. Children are well managed. Consequently, they work hard and give of their best.

There are examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in the Foundation Stage, in Year 6 and in music. Such exemplary teaching is characterised by the provision of highly stimulating activities. Year 6 children's dramatisation of the story of Macbeth, and Nursery and Reception children's total absorption in making miniature gardens and writing stories about watermelons, are examples of outstanding teaching being converted into excellent learning.

Although most of the teaching is good, there are occasions when children's learning is limited. This happens when teachers spend too long discussing ideas with the whole class, leaving insufficient time for children to practise and improve their skills in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that is rich, stimulating and innovative. It more than fulfils national requirements and builds very effectively on what children already know. The strong emphasis on personal, social and health education makes a valuable contribution to children's personal development.

The school is highly effective in involving the community in children's learning. In working alongside musicians, actors, authors, artists and sportsmen and women, children are inspired and their love of learning flourishes. The school is now a leading establishment in showcasing what can be achieved through such creative partnerships. In addition, a vast assortment of well-attended additional activities, including modern foreign languages, is provided. These are thoroughly enjoyed and nurture children's talents and interests very effectively. For example children's increasing environmental awareness, musical expertise and artistic appreciation make a profound impact on their achievements, particularly in science and the arts.

The highly inclusive nature of the school ensures that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are centrally involved in all activities and are able to make good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, support and guidance provided are outstanding. The school's highly inclusive nature strikes a chord with most parents. As one commented on the provision made for his child with severe educational needs, 'My child is seen as a whole person and receives excellent care and support.'

Children's academic and personal development is very carefully tracked. The information is used very effectively to meet their individual needs. Achievement is celebrated. Children's work is very constructively marked. Meaningful targets are set. These factors provide excellent levels of guidance.

Children's personal safety and well-being is paramount. Many outside agencies are consulted to help the school to provide excellent levels of care and support. This is not only extended to the vulnerable ones but also ensures that all children's self-esteem and talents are nurtured. The school's internal child protection and health and safety procedures are exemplary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good overall. The headteacher's outstanding leadership is reflected in the excellent curriculum and exemplary levels of care, guidance and support provided. Significantly improved standards since the last inspection illustrate the school's search for excellence and its very good capacity for improvement.

The headteacher is well supported by senior staff, not least in setting examples of excellent teaching. In particular, the three advanced skills teachers drive their subjects forward, providing impetus for other teachers in subjects such as music, the arts and physical education. Governors are centrally involved in the work of the school. Guided by the views of parents and children, they provide good support in holding the school to account.

The quality of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is satisfactory. There are good features, particularly in the way children's learning is assessed and improved. However, some of the subject leaders do not have enough opportunities to observe teaching in their subjects and reflect on the progress children make in their written work.

The school is highly inclusive and is widely respected for its success in catering for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school equally considers the needs of the able, gifted and talented children. Resources are used wisely to support teachers and provide a rich and meaningful education.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit and would like you to know what we found out. You are correct in your opinion that your school is a good one. The good features are:

- your good achievement and the high standards in mathematics, science, music, art and design and physical education
- the way your school is led and managed
- the good teaching you receive that helps you to learn successfully
- your good attitudes, behaviour and personal development
- the excellent level of care provided for you
- the excellent curriculum that helps you to enjoy learning.

Your teachers are trying to make the school even better. We think these things will help:

- your progress in writing could improve further if you had more time to practise and improve your skills. You need to play your part by trying really hard to complete longer pieces of interesting and accurate writing
- teachers in charge of subjects need to observe you being taught and look more closely at the work in your books to find out how well you are learning and what more they can do to help you.