



Black Horse Hill Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105032
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277276
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Dee Brigstock CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Saughall Massie Road
School category	Community		West Kirby
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Wirral, Merseyside CH48 6DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6258446
Number on roll	222	Fax number	0151 6252999
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Crowden
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr Harry Kennedy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Black Horse Junior is an average sized school. In common with other schools in the area, the number on roll is gradually declining. Most pupils are of white British heritage, with few from minority ethnic backgrounds, and just one at a relatively early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The socio-economic background of most pupils is above average. When pupils start school, their skills and knowledge are well above average. An average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Few pupils leave or join the school between Years 3 and 6. Over the last four years, several members of staff have been absent for long periods of time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and the school cares for their health, welfare and safety well. However, not enough guidance is given to pupils on how to improve their work so pupils' care, guidance and support is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay fit and safe. Their behaviour is good and so are their attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school. The curriculum is satisfactory. It equips pupils well for their future economic well-being. Curriculum enrichment activities are good and a lot of pupils attend these.

Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. They enter school with well above average attainment and leave with standards that are above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. Results in 2005 show an improvement in the proportion of pupils meeting and exceeding the standards expected for their age, particularly in English but too many pupils make inadequate progress, particularly in mathematics.

The school is not as effective as it could be because the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is not good enough. Consequently, the value for money provided by the school is unsatisfactory.

The headteacher has carried more management responsibilities than usual due to the prolonged staff absence of key staff and this has held back progress. Governors are aware of this. His identification of pupils' underachievement and weaknesses in teaching is accurate but the strategies the school uses to ensure improvement, through monitoring, have been slow to make a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Therefore the school's capacity to improve, its evaluation of its performance as a good school, and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve pupils' achievement by:

- improving teachers' expertise in the use of assessment so that all have a clear idea of the levels that pupils attain
- using the information from assessments to plan work which is more exactly matched to pupils' learning needs
- raising pupils' and teachers' expectations of pupils' progress
- increasing pupils' opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems
- keep a careful and more accurate track of pupils' progress so that more precise targets can be set for each year group.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils enter school with levels of attainment that are much better than those expected for their age. By Year 6, standards are broadly average in mathematics and science and slightly above average in English, showing inadequate achievement by pupils over time and declining standards, particularly in mathematics.

The headteacher is well aware of this underachievement and has begun to tackle it, in partnership with the local authority. They have made focused lesson observations which identify ways in which pupils' progress could be improved. Up to this point, these interventions have not raised standards, particularly in mathematics. Pupils' learning targets are not all written in language that they understand. In addition, the school's assessments of how well pupils are doing, from one year group to the next, vary too much for them to be accurate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do have individual targets but these too lack precision and a tracking system for measuring their progress has only just come into operation. Their progress is also unsatisfactory when compared to their starting points.

The targets for improvement in each subject are not specific enough in the school development plan. The headteacher and staff cannot use them to measure pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is well above average. They learn how to stay fit and healthy well and parents are very pleased with the information given to them and their children about sex and drugs education. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well mannered and have good attitudes towards each other, valuing each other's opinions and differences. Pupils develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures. The school council values its contribution to school improvement; for example, by influencing a change to healthy snacks at break times. Pupils are rewarded for good citizenship daily by receiving the headteacher's Golden Citizen Award and regular Circle Times provide pupils with good opportunities to discuss concerns.

Pupils' behaviour is generally very good, although occasionally, when work is too difficult or too easy, some lose interest in lessons and fidget. Older pupils are prepared well for their future; for example, through organising play activities at lunchtimes, and gain a good understanding of work through joint 'Enterprise events' with their next school. This also helps with their transition at the end of Year 6. Pupils make a good contribution to the local and wider community through charitable fund-raising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

There are weaknesses in teaching which make teaching and learning unsatisfactory. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching for it to be good, as the school's self-evaluation suggests. Teaching on a lesson-by-lesson basis is mostly satisfactory, with some good examples, but pupils' books show that for some, the work they do is too easy and for other pupils it is too difficult. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics where teachers' plans do not always take account of the learning needs of different groups of pupils. In some sets, the most capable pupils are given additional but not always more challenging work, with the rest of the group doing the same work. This results in poor progress for both the least and most capable pupils.

Some good practical, investigative work was seen which pupils really enjoyed. However, there are too few examples of this kind of learning in pupils' books and the school has rightly identified this area as needing improvement.

The time at the end of lessons is not consistently used well enough for assessing and recording pupils' learning. Some teachers' assessments of pupils' standards are inaccurate and vary too widely between one year group and the next to track pupils' progress accurately, so the school does not have an accurate picture of how well all pupils are doing. Well briefed teaching assistants are good at helping lower ability pupils, particularly with reading, but on occasion, teaching assistants are not well informed enough to be effective in classrooms.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The use of national strategies and guidelines meets requirements, although teachers are not using these guidelines well enough to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and French is taught to three year groups in partnership with the local high school. In addition, nearly 20% of pupils take advantage of specialist teaching to learn to play a musical instrument. Educational visits and visitors to school give pupils good opportunities to enrich their learning and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which over half the children attend. Provision for children's personal, social, citizenship and health education is good and supports their emotional well-being, health and safety well. As pupils prepare to move on from school they work on a shared curriculum with their secondary school, effectively helping pupils to view their education as a continuous process.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The good relationships in school reflect the good pastoral care, guidance and support given to pupils. This is noticeable in the way pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are successfully supported in school by pupils and adults. Arrangements for child protection and in ensuring vulnerable children are supported are good, and the headteacher ensures that effective procedures, including detailed risk assessments, ensure pupils' safety. New pupils settle well in school because of the very good support parents and pupils receive, and similarly good procedures are in place to support transfer to pupils' next schools. Good attention is given to promoting pupils' health and fitness. At an academic level, accurate assessment information is not used well enough to set targets and help pupils understand how they might improve their learning. This is why pupils care, guidance and support is satisfactory rather than good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has, because of prolonged absence by senior staff, carried more management responsibilities than usual, leaving him with insufficient time to lead school improvement effectively. This has also been key in holding back the improvements needed in the school. He knows, through his own monitoring, which aspects of teaching need improvement and is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for every child who attends. However, actions taken so far have not resulted in enough progress by pupils over the last four years. The trend for improvement is downwards and, therefore, the school's capacity to improve, and overall leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

School self-evaluation is inaccurate, judging itself as a good school. It clearly identifies pupils' underachievement and gives some considered reasons for the causes of this, but is not sharp enough on how achievement can be improved. The school has welcomed advice and support from the local authority in this. The current school development plan identifies correct priorities for action, but the criteria by which the success of actions and pupils' progress can be measured are not sufficiently detailed for them to be used to measure improvement.

The school is fully inclusive and the views of governors, parents and pupils are regularly sought and taken into account. The chair of governors is skilled, knowledgeable and has a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but governors as a whole do not challenge the rate of pupils' progress enough even though they are aware of the declining standards.

Since the last inspection, standards have fallen. This is partly, but not entirely, explained by the school's change in its intake, changes in staffing, and staff absence over the last three years. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is not as good now and so progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Please make sure you explain what this letter says to all the children in school.

Please thank all the children in school for being so helpful to us during our visit.

These are the things we liked the most.

- We think your behaviour is good and you look after each other well.
- We like the way you organise games at lunchtime and the work you do with your next school.
- We believe you have a really good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy.

We have asked your school to improve by doing these things now.

- We think that you could do more investigations and problem solving in mathematics.
- We think you need better targets that you understand so that your work improves.
- We have asked your teachers to get better at making assessments of your work so that your lessons are better planned and you learn more.
- We have asked your headteacher to put your targets into his school plan and measure how well you are meeting them.