



# Mersey Park Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105042  
**LEA** Wirral  
**Inspection number** 277279  
**Inspection dates** 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Ms Angela Westington HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Elm Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Higher Tranmere
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Birkenhead, Merseyside CH42 OPH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6478197
<b>Number on roll</b>	419	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6501021
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr D Selby
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 September 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Cartwright

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277279
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Mersey Park is a Community Primary school in Higher Tranmere, an area of significant deprivation. It currently has 420 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11. There are 107 children in the Foundation Stage of whom 52 are in the nursery. The number of children receiving free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is about average. The number of pupils identified by the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average although none has a statement of special educational need. The mobility of pupils into and out of the school is broadly average but is higher in some year groups. Children enter the school with standards that are well below what is expected.

## **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 good school which has many strengths, including the outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of its pupils. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils achieve well overall despite the low baseline they start from and, by the end of Key Stage 2, they attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are around the national average and are better than those achieved by many similar schools. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are also better than those found in similar schools. At the time of the previous inspection, the test results for Year 2 pupils were above national standards, but now fewer children are getting to the middle and higher levels of reading, writing and mathematics. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress; the vast majority of them working within the expected levels by the time they leave reception.

Children at the school are happy; have very positive attitudes to learning and are growing into responsible members of the community. Parents regard the school highly.

The school has taken effective action to improve achievement in mathematics and science and this has had a particularly good impact on standards at the end of Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching overall is good but the systems for teaching reading and writing in Key Stage 1 are not fully secure. The school has experienced turnover of teachers. This has affected Key Stage 1 in particular. The curriculum is satisfactory.

All the issues raised in the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively and the school has the capacity to continue to improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of reading and writing in Years 1 and 2, so that the pupils make the progress they are capable of.
- Improve the quality of curriculum management across the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The school judges this aspect of its work to be good and inspectors agree. The majority of children enter the nursery with skills well below those expected nationally. They make good progress overall and, by the time they leave the Foundation Stage (reception class), most are working within the levels expected for this age group, though very few exceed them.

Standards attained by pupils by the time they leave the school at 11 are satisfactory overall and this represents good achievement given their low starting points. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress overall and achieve very creditable standards in English, mathematics and science. Tests scores in mathematics have improved recently

as a result of action taken by the school to redress a dip in previous years and, in the most recent tests, the English scores have improved. However, boys do not do as well as girls in English, especially in their writing.

In the Year 2 tests, pupils gain results that are the same as, or better than, those gained by many similar schools. In real terms though, results in Key Stage 1 have declined since the time of the previous inspection with fewer children getting to the middle and higher levels of reading, writing and mathematics. Test results are now below the national averages. Given the good start they get in the Foundation Stage, this means they make less progress than they should in Key Stage 1.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, although some do better than this, making enough progress for them to be removed from the special needs register.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that provision for pupils' personal development and well being are good. The pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic in their lessons. Most work hard and cooperate well with each other and with adults. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good with pupils showing respect and consideration for others. They willingly accept responsibility and are cheerful, polite and helpful. The school council has been influential in bringing improvement into school life. For example, they have sought improvements in the toilet facilities, the provision of playtime equipment for use at lunchtime, the redesigning of the playground facilities and the introduction of healthier food at the Christmas party. School council members represent their classmates very effectively.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance which is now satisfactory. The number of family holidays taken during term time adversely affects whole school attendance figures. The school uses a range of rewards and strategies including employing a home school link support assistant who works very hard to improve the situation.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school celebrates pupils' achievements in lessons and assemblies. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of world religions and cultures through lessons and visits. Their grasp of basic skills by the time they are 11 is satisfactory and they are very strongly encouraged to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles, therefore giving them a sound foundation for future well-being. The school is involved in the Healthy Schools initiative.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's view that teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is overwhelmingly good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, and leads to the pupils achieving well by the time they leave the school. Strengths include the good relationships between teachers and pupils and, in the best lessons, a lively pace to the learning with pupils enjoying the humour of the teacher. There are examples of boys being engaged well in their learning, for example, in following a comic book version of Macbeth. Teaching and learning are not as strong in Years 1 and 2, where they are satisfactory with some examples of good teaching. They have been adversely affected in recent years by high turnover of staff and this has contributed to a decline in standards. Currently, the teaching of reading and writing is failing to provide pupils in Years 1 and 2 with a firm enough basis upon which they can build quickly. Nevertheless, some good teaching, which shows the same strengths as those evident in other year groups, was seen in these classes. The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Teachers plan appropriately for their needs and classroom assistants keep a close eye on their progress, especially in reading. However, the withdrawal of pupils from class lessons for support sometimes interferes with their learning. Procedures to assess how well pupils are doing are good and help the teachers to set challenging targets and chart their progress over time.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school judges the curriculum to be good but inspectors find it to be satisfactory overall. This judgement reflects a mix of strengths and some weaknesses. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils satisfactorily and contains the usual range of subjects. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. The teaching of literacy has shortcomings in Years 1 and 2, where the basics are not taught well enough to establish a good platform for achievement by the end of Year 2. A consequence of this is that the time given to literacy in classes for older children is increased to accelerate their learning. This can lead to an overemphasis on English on some days with the timetable unbalanced. Provision for mathematics is good and is enhanced by grouping pupils according to their attainment into teaching sets in Years 5 and 6. Provision in information and communication technology is good. Links between subjects are being explored well. However, some initiatives, such as teaching subjects in blocks of time, are being introduced in some, but not all, year groups. They require careful monitoring in order to check their quality and impact. Pupils benefit from a good programme of lessons in personal, social and health education and citizenship, which covers some key elements concerning their health, safety and well-being. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors as well as successful themed weeks to enrich the pupils' experiences.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school takes excellent care of all its pupils. Pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they need help. There is very good support for them when they are upset or troubled. The home school link support assistant provides a very valuable contribution by working closely with pupils and their families. Parents and carers feel welcome in the school and are strongly encouraged, through parents' meetings and workshops, to be involved in their children's education. The pupils say they feel safe in school because the rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively by all the staff. The arrangements for preparing pupils for their transfer to secondary school are good. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very well established and there are very good links with outside agencies, which give a range of help to the pupils. There are very clear strategies in place for the early identification of children who may be in need of additional emotional support.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good and are focused on raising standards and improving provision. The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses as indicated in the school's self evaluation; much of this gained through the detailed and comprehensive monitoring of teachers' planning and lessons that is carried out.

Oversight of the whole school curriculum is less strong and, to some extent, lacks direction. Staff absences and changing responsibilities have led to a discontinuity in its management, but the school has responded positively in addressing these staffing issues. Individual subject and team leaders are knowledgeable and well informed. They monitor planning and occasionally observe teaching. However, the overview of subjects across the classes and year groups needs sharpening.

The most recent areas of development have been mathematics and science. Through targeted action, some of it in the form of support from the local authority, the school has brought about improvements in mathematics results in Key Stage 2. Separately, the subject leader for English identified specific gaps in the teaching of English in upper Key Stage 2 classes and took action to redress this. The school's latest results in English have improved as a result.

In Key Stage 1 there is no consistent policy for teaching the phonics and 200 key words listed for this age group and the methods for teaching reading are unclear. The school has rightly made staffing changes to address perceived areas of weaknesses in Key Stage 1, and has reviewed the use of guided reading for groups of pupils. The teaching of reading, especially, still lacks rigour and consistency.

In most respects the school's self-evaluation is strong. Staff, parents and governors are all involved in the process of reviewing the school. Governance of the school is effective; governors are not afraid to hold the school to account and to ask questions.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

As you know, we visited your school recently and we would like to thank you for talking to us and making us feel so welcome.

We looked at many of the things you do in school and talked with your teachers and some of the people who help you, as well as a few of your parents. We thought that you behaved very well and we could tell that you and your families are proud of the school. These are some of the things that we really liked.

- The people in school work very closely with your parents to make sure that you are safe, well cared for and happy when you come to school. Some of you spoke to us about this, so we know you agree.

- There are interesting things for you to do including after school clubs. You like the new playground and enjoyed being involved in its design.

- You enjoy being with each other and get on well with the adults in school. You are trying hard to be healthy and eat sensibly.

- You work hard, and your teachers work hard too, so you do well in your tests.

We have asked your headteacher to try to make sure that the younger children in the school learn to read and write as quickly as possible so that all of you can do really well when you are older. We know that you will continue to work hard when this happens and that your mums, dads and carers will help you.

We wish you every blessing for the future.