



Barlows Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104517
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286967
Inspection dates 27–28 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Ashton

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barlows Lane
School category	Community		Fazakerley, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L9 9EH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 5252751
Number on roll (school)	406	Fax number	0151 5258310
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr D Horlick
		Headteacher	Mrs J Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 27–28 November 2006	Inspection number 286967
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school has a Nursery which offers 52 part-time places. It serves a socially mixed area of Liverpool, with higher than average deprivation, close to Aintree Racecourse. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few speak English as an additional language. A smaller than average proportion of pupils presently has learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the 25 place special school on site is to come under the management of Barlows in January 2007. In May 2007, a Children's Centre providing for the community's health as well as educational needs, will also come under the management of Barlows.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that Barlows Primary is a good school with some outstanding features, notably:

- the very effective way it enhances pupils' personal development and well-being
- the much improved balance, enrichment and range of cross-curricular links in its curriculum
- its very effective senior leadership team
- Its truly excellent new accommodation.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They praise the good start in life it gives their children. 'My son has become much more independent', one parent wrote. 'This is due to the teachers taking time to listen to the children and their views', said another. Pupils also love the school. 'Everyone is so friendly here that I have too many friends', one pupil said. Another spoke warmly of all the environmental work on recycling and the enjoyable trips and visits he is involved in at school. The outstanding curriculum is rich and promotes pupils' personal and academic achievements extremely well.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school. There is good provision in the Foundation Stage. From a below average starting point on entry to the Nursery, they leave at the end of Year 6 with above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

The school is well led and gives good value for money. Its self-evaluation is rigorous and backed up by determined action to improve the areas of relative weakness. Mathematics, particularly for boys in Key Stage 2, science across the school, and the degree of challenge for the more able pupils are recent focuses of attention and these have all improved as a result of the school's actions.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning because of the way it is made so interesting by the good quality teaching. They feel very safe in school because they are cared for well and there are effective systems to prevent bullying. They are very aware of the merits of exercise and healthy eating. Their good social and rapidly improving literacy and numeracy skills provide a secure basis for the next stages of their lives. Many of them serve their school and the local community well in a whole range of different ways.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Despite all the recent improvements, the school is aware that there are two areas which still need attention. Attendance is below the national average because some parents still take their children out of school for holidays during term time and children's skill levels as they enter the school are not assessed and recorded as systematically as they need to be. This makes measuring their future progress difficult. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken during term time.

- Sharpen the accuracy of assessments of children entering the Nursery in order to give the school a clearer picture of children's attainment and to make it easier to measure their progress from then on.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with below average knowledge and skills overall and make good progress such that the majority reach the expected national goals by the end of the Reception year. This good progress continues into Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards consistently match the national average overall by the end of Year 2 and results in the national test results at the end of Year 6 are usually well in line with those expected nationally. Results dipped below those expected in mathematics and science in 2005, due to too few pupils achieving the higher National Curriculum levels, but the school's perceptive diagnosis of the causes of this dip led to effective action which brought about the necessary improvements. Results in 2006 improved significantly in English, mathematics and science and are above average. The agreed targets for all three subjects were exceeded.

Those groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, also make good progress, reflecting the well-focused support they receive. Higher attaining pupils were seen to be thoroughly challenged in lessons. This reflects the school's determination to stretch them well, after analysis of the previous year's results identified fewer than expected higher grades, particularly in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. In this school 'Every Child Matters' is much more than words. It is a driving force empowering pupils to have an effective voice not only in the school but also in the wider world.

Pupils thoroughly appreciate and enjoy school and develop into caring young citizens who know how to keep themselves and others safe and healthy. Behaviour is exemplary. Throughout their time at school they make outstanding progress in developing their personal skills and attributes. This helps them develop into thoughtful and mature young people. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' cultural understanding and appreciation of the beliefs and customs of other religions and traditions are well developed through assemblies and themed projects. The weekly 'circle of friends' meeting held throughout the school gives pupils an avenue to express and share their feelings. They say, 'if you have a problem our teachers sort it out for us'. Attendance, however, is below the national average, mainly because some parents still take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Relationships are exemplary between staff and pupils and, as a result, pupils are keen to work hard and do their best. The teachers have the ability to capture and hold pupils' attention and to promote their enjoyment. For example, in a science lesson, Year 1 pupils' understanding was improved through their joy and delight at discovering that shiny things did not carry on shining in the dark. Classroom management is good and promotes excellent behaviour. The noticeably fast pace and challenge within lessons effectively keep pupils firmly on task, enabling all groups of pupils to make good progress. Questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding and to develop their confidence in speaking and listening. Teaching assistants are skillfully deployed and well briefed to ensure that vulnerable pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are provided with tasks which cater well for their individual needs. In the Foundation Stage, lessons are well organised and are particularly effective in promoting pupils' personal and social development. However, in some classes throughout the school, learning intentions are not always made clear enough to pupils to enable them to assess their own progress throughout the lesson. Teachers are very confident in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and good use is made of computers for extension work to enable higher achieving pupils to tackle more challenging work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Criticised at the last inspection for its narrowness, the school's present curriculum is now very broad and well balanced. It is, in fact, so much improved it is outstanding. Achievement in mathematics, English and ICT is strengthened by their regular use in other subjects. The curriculum caters excellently for all groups within the school and provides a wide range of activities for pupils to learn from, including some excellent Spanish teaching. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of lunchtime and after-school activities which are offered across the school to allow pupils to pursue a variety of sporting, creative and other interests. The curriculum is further enriched by the wealth of visits that the children are involved in, including residential and international trips. The many visitors into school provide the pupils with further splendid experiences, which add an extra dimension to their education. These experiences are often linked into topic work which is another strength of the school and which allow pupils to develop their learning across a number of elements of the curriculum. Pupils greatly enjoy this approach and become more active, independent learners because of it.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff show a good level of care for pupils and the pupils feel safe and secure because of this. One pupil said that he felt safe because 'you are never alone here, there is always an adult around to look after you'. One parent represented the views of many when she said that the school 'provides a happy, caring environment in which children learn well'. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs identified early and are well supported by teachers and support staff to help them to make good progress. Child protection procedures are fully in place. The school's guidance for pupils is good and a tracking system is in place throughout the majority of the school, which clearly indicates the progress of individual pupils. The school looks carefully at the progress of different groups of children to ensure that all get equal opportunities to succeed. Information on children's capabilities on entry to the school, however, is neither assessed nor recorded as well as it could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels in the school. The senior leadership is outstanding and is the key factor in the school's notable improvement since its last inspection. A sparkling curriculum, thoroughly good teaching and learning across the school, exemplary personal development, good achievement and rising academic standards are the result. Senior leadership is very organised, visionary and forward looking. It is particularly successful at empowering the phase managers and subject coordinators by, for example, keeping them thoroughly in touch with all developments affecting the school and involving them in the monitoring and quality control of the work of their colleagues. School development planning is rightly focused on improving achievement, especially recently in mathematics and science, particularly for boys and the more able pupils in general. There is a strong commitment to improving teaching and learning, including through increased teamwork and the sharing of good practice. Self-evaluation is diagnostic, well focused, realistic and accurate. Governors are very well informed and aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because, as well as receiving regular reports from the headteacher, they have active individual links with particular subjects. They challenge the school in a positive way as well as support it. The school is well resourced and its excellent new accommodation is used to very good effect. It provides good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome on our recent visit to your school. A very special thanks to those children who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk with us. You told us so many good things about your school, including how much some of you enjoyed working on the school council and on the school's environmental and fair trade projects.

Some of the other things we particularly like about your school are:

- its magnificent new building
- how well looked after you all are and how pleased your parents are about your school
- how much you enjoy your lessons and how positive you all are about your learning
- the interesting range of activities staff organise for you inside and outside of lesson times
- how well taught you all are
- how very well led and managed your school is.

To make your school even better, we have asked the staff to persuade your parents not to take you away from school to go on holiday in term time, so that you do not lose valuable learning time.

We have also asked that the children, as they enter the Nursery, are assessed as early and as carefully as possible in order to make it easier to see later how much progress they make as they move through the school.

We wish every one of you well for the future and hope that you will always work as hard and enjoy school as much as you do now.