



Belle Vale Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104519
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286968
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Ravey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Besford Road
School category	Community		Gateacre, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L25 2QF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 4878571
Number on roll (school)	314	Fax number	0151 283 4395
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs N Blackburne
		Headteacher	Mrs J Potter
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006	Inspection number 286968
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves an outer city area that has a significant degree of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average and many more pupils than usual are identified as having learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils are White British and nearly all speak English as their mother tongue. The number of pupils on roll is falling, in common with other schools in the area. The school has a Basic Skills and a Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. It works well in partnership with parents and outside agencies to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning they have. The large majority of parents think highly of it. Children start Nursery with below average skills. They make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage and as a result are working towards the learning goals expected of this age when they start Year 1. Progress through the Foundation Stage is no better than satisfactory because the Foundation Stage curriculum is not sufficiently stimulating and teaching sometimes is not focused sufficiently on how to move children's learning on. When pupils leave Year 6, standards are still below average although, given their starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and their achievement is satisfactory. In recent years, standards at Belle Vale have risen at much the same rate as they have done nationally but the school is not closing the gap between its standards and those across the country. This is mainly because standards in mathematics, in particular, are too low. More able pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English, mathematics and science. These pupils often do not receive work that challenges them to learn well. In contrast, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and achieve well because the school's provision for them is good. The variations in the effectiveness of teaching mean that, although there is some good teaching in the school, overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

The school achieves good outcomes for its pupils in their personal development. Pupils behave well. They develop a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and how to contribute to the well-being of others. Relationships throughout the school are good and the result of this shows in the way pupils enjoy school. The good range of activities outside lessons contributes to pupils' enjoyment of school and helps enrich the curriculum. However, the quality of curriculum remains satisfactory overall because more able pupils are not as well catered for as they should be and provision in the Foundation Stage is only satisfactory. A notable feature of the school's provision is the good care it gives its pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe and valued. Attendance had been low in recent years but has improved significantly thanks to the school's good efforts. Leadership and management have significant strengths in the way they promote pupils' personal and social development, in the quality of care provided and in the support for pupils with learning difficulties. Overall the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory as, despite these strengths, the school does not yet enable all groups of pupils to achieve as well as they should. A great deal of effort is put into checking the quality of the school's work and planning to improve it. As yet this is not sufficiently well focused on the few key areas that will really move the school forward. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its performance but does not yet measure improvement sharply enough in relation to pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. The steady improvement in standards over recent years and the school's understanding of its strengths and weaknesses indicate satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Years 1 to 6.
- Provide a greater and more consistent level of challenge for more able pupils to enable them to achieve as well as they should in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage so that children make good progress.
- Focus and work on the few key priorities that will improve the school and measure success in terms of the outcomes for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with below average language and personal and social skills. Although they settle into school well and make good early progress in developing their personal and social skills, their overall progress through the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. There is sometimes a lack of purpose in the learning activities in which they engage, especially those in which they are allowed the freedom to find out things for themselves. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory overall but vary between different groups of pupils. Those with learning difficulties make good progress because they are given good support in lessons, but more able pupils often do not receive work that is well designed to meet their learning needs. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they should. This is evident in the lower than average numbers reaching high levels in national tests and assessments. Whilst the school succeeds in getting most of its Year 6 pupils to the nationally expected standard, it does not enable enough of the more able to achieve beyond this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school has a clear vision for implementing the principles of 'Every Child Matters' and the outcomes for pupils show that this is being translated successfully into practice. Good relationships between pupils and staff contribute significantly to pupils' good behaviour, good attitudes to work and enjoyment of school. The strong emphasis placed on developing healthy lifestyles is evident in pupils' understanding of what it means to live a healthy life - and from the way they tuck into the healthy choices offered at lunch time! They are keen to contribute to others' well-being, for example through contributing to charities. Pupils enjoy opportunities to develop work-related skills, for example, by helping design stalls for the schools' Summer Fayre. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to opportunities to work together and are proud of the achievements of their school 'house teams'. They show satisfactory awareness of cultures other than their own. Very good cooperation with the local authority has seen significant improvements in attendance in the past year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching promotes good relationships and results in pupils being keen to learn. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. All this means that a good climate for learning is created. However, teaching generally is more successful in promoting the learning of pupils with learning difficulties than the more able. Very similar tasks are sometimes provided for most pupils, resulting in the more able not being sufficiently challenged. Even when different tasks are provided, these do not always stretch the brightest pupils as much as they should. Where teaching is most effective, these pupils are given work that stretches them. Good teaching is more evident in Years 3 to 6 than in other parts of the school. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and are beginning to use the school's recently revised marking system to good effect to praise good work and point out how to improve further. However, this is not yet done consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum succeeds well in meeting pupils' personal and social needs, including a strong programme to promote healthy living. Pupils with learning difficulties are well catered for. Their individual learning plans are clear and easy to follow and this helps staff provide the right learning activities for these pupils. However, in the Foundation Stage, the opportunities provided for children to learn independently are not as well planned as they should be and this restricts progress. Similarly, the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 does not provide as well as it should for more able pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the various activities that enrich and extend the curriculum. They support extra-curricular activities well, with the school providing a good balance of arts, sports and academic activities for them. The school's commitment to the arts is reflected in these clubs and in its preparation to achieve an Artsmark award. In this it has paid good attention to an issue raised by the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school pays good attention to caring for its pupils. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will help and advise them. Child protection procedures are in place and the school takes the proper steps to ensure all staff are cleared to work with children. A parent accurately summed up the school's success in caring for its pupils by saying, 'The school is very welcoming and the teachers are always ready to listen and sort out any problems promptly.' The individual learning plans for pupils with learning difficulties are very clear and this makes it easy to check progress. Vulnerable pupils are supported with sensitivity. However, the support provided for more able pupils is not sufficient to help them achieve as well as they should. The school is working hard to improve

the academic guidance it provides for pupils This is satisfactory overall, but new systems to help pupils improve further are not implemented consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, staff and governors show strong commitment to providing pupils with a caring environment in which their personal and social development flourishes. That commitment is also there for pupils' academic development but the same degree of success has not yet been achieved. The school's commitment to helping all pupils get the best out of their education is exemplified by the success it achieves for pupils with learning difficulties and by the very good care taken of vulnerable pupils. However, it is not yet succeeding in raising standards sufficiently in mathematics or getting the best out of its most able pupils. It recognises this. In partnership with the local authority, great effort has gone into checking performance but the school's plan for improvement does not concentrate closely enough on those few key priorities that will really move it on, or identify precisely enough what improvement will look like in terms of the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make. The governing body is knowledgeable and supportive but does not yet provide a sharp enough challenge to school managers to give the necessary spur to improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our time with you and your teachers. You told us that you enjoy school and we could tell that from how happily you work and play together. We think your school is giving you a satisfactory education and that some things about it are really good. These are:

- the way you behave and your good attitudes to work
- the way everyone in your school cares so well for you
- the good progress made by those children who find learning difficult - and the good help they get
- how very much aware you are of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle - one way we could tell that was the way you really tucked in to your school meals!

There are some things that we think your headteacher and teachers should do to make your school even better.

- Help you to do better in mathematics.
- Give the quick learners more challenging work to help them reach higher standards.
- Give the children in the Nursery and Reception classes some more exciting activities to help them learn.
- Keep a close eye on the most important things to do to make your school get even better.

You can help by studying hard, particularly at mathematics, and keeping up the good standards you've set yourselves in the way you behave and get on with each other.

All the best for the future